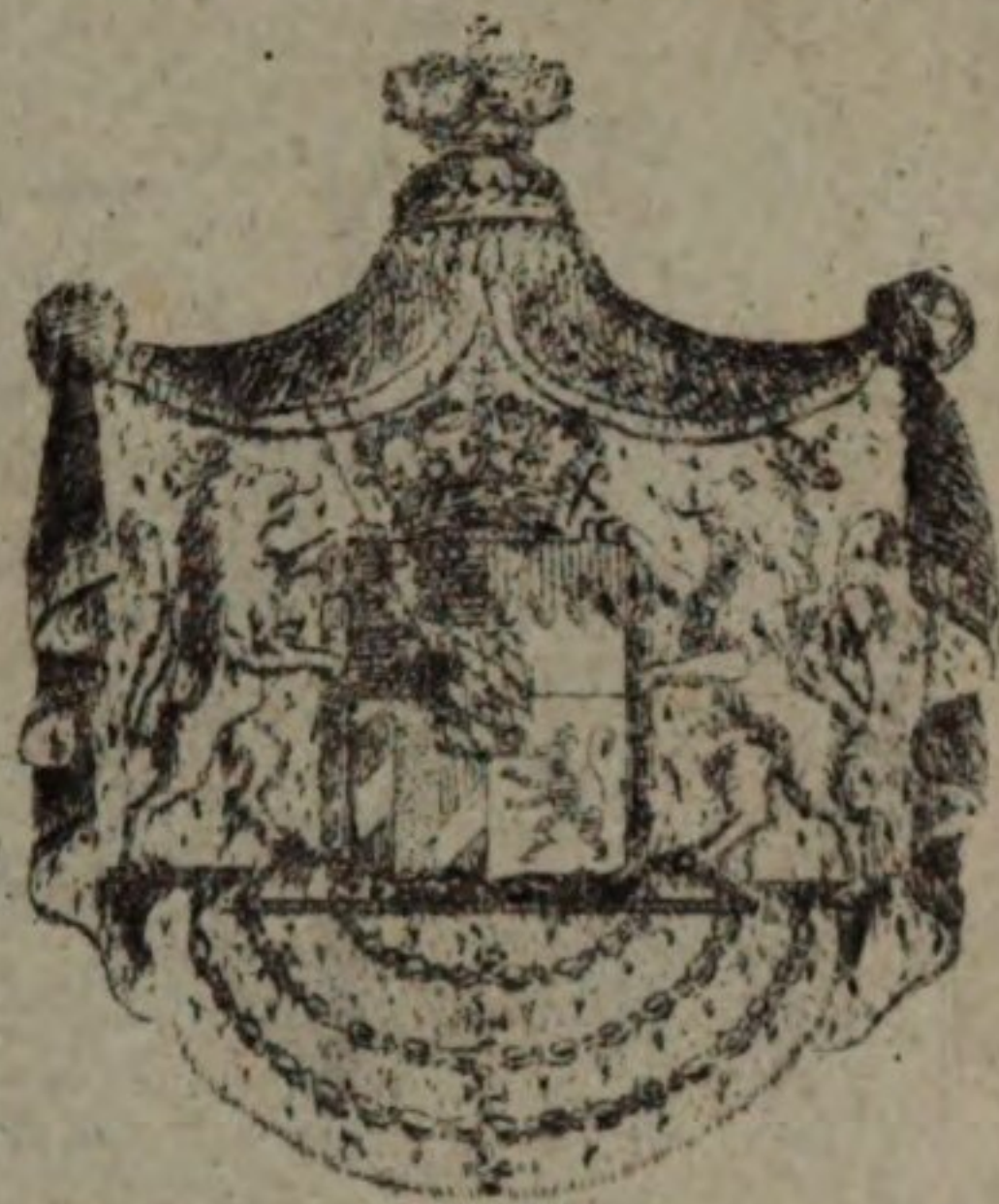


P. o. angl. 203 b (3)



BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS.

Ex donat Molliana.

<36623843610013

<36623843610013

Bayer. Staatsbibliothek

THE
LIFE OF A LOVER.

VOL. III.

S. Hamilton, Printer, Shoe-Lane, Fleet-Street.

3

19

B6

THE
LIFE OF A LOVER

VOL. III.

Printed by J. B. Allen, Printer, New York, 1850.

THE
LIFE OF A LOVER.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY SOPHIA LEE.

Honour, that spark of the celestial fire
Which above nature makes mankind aspire,
Ennobles the rude passions of our frame.
* * * * *
The richest treasure of a gen'rous breast,
Which gives the stamp and standard to the rest.
MARQ. OF HALIFAX.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. & J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1804.

LIFE OF A LOVER

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

BY SCHILLER

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

IN SIX VOLUMES

Vol. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1797.

THE
LIFE
OF A
LOVER.

LETTER LXI.
TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

WELL, if I am now disappointed, I shall never more entertain a hope of success, but quietly shrink into some nutshell of a cottage, and knit stockings for my livelihood. Mrs. Granville always hated my being managed by children, under the idea of managing them; and has at length prevailed on me to think of being a companion. A young widow of high rank who has applied to her for

such a social friend, possesses, she assures me, as much the power as the will to reward merit.

Lady Killarney is a peeress of Ireland by inheritance; and, as I am told, no less distinguished for wit, than title, fortune, and beauty. In truth, as far as I may judge, she owes the reputation of wit and beauty, only to her title and fortune. Having just lost a husband whom she adored, in a duel, she has been advised by her friends to travel, to dissipate her grief. France and Italy, at least, she means to visit; and offers to make any young lady whom she can prefer as an associate, a very liberal acknowledgment. Her choice is not yet fixed; though, if I can reconcile myself to leaving England, she seems to give me a preference.

I know not why I do not like this lady, for she is young, obliging, and generous. Perhaps it was her person that did not please me; for it has a showiness which, to a female eye, never supplies the place of delicacy and softness. Her voice

and manners, too, are tinged with the peculiarities of her own country, and not highly polished. She has an examining, unblushing kind of air, that ill accords with a nature like mine, though I know not how to sink under it.

Mrs. Granville, however, fancies that my fortune is made in pleasing such a patroness; and I plainly perceive, were I to indulge any captiousness on this occasion, I should lose her warm heart. I think therefore, however reluctant, I must accede to Lady Killarney's proposal, under one stipulation—viz. that if she extends her tour beyond what I may deem a proper distance, she shall allow me a carriage and servant to the sea-port nearest England.

* * * * *

I would not, on reflexion, torture you with suspense, or myself with reading those arguments which you might urge against this new plan—arguments, alas! which my own weak heart perhaps anticipated. Lady Killarney made not the

smallest objection to my stipulation, and desired me to take up my abode immediately in the ready-furnished house which she occupies during the days that her travelling equipage is preparing. Those days pass wholly in hurry, affected obscurity, and secret *éclat*. She is not without a perfect consciousness of all her rights in life; and, notwithstanding the due parade of widows' tears, can scold her mantua-maker for not making the odious dress a little more tolerable. In short, her Ladyship, it is already obvious, will not die with grief for Mr. Fitzmaurice; whose death seems to have been a jubilee to the rest of the family. In truth, if his temper was worse than his lady's, the house must have been in arms; for her passions toward the servants terrify me. In all instances relative to myself, she is perfectly well-bred and obliging. My accommodating my dress to that of the family, seemed much to impress and please her.

Certainly she shows her good sense in one instance—forbearing to make the sub-

ject of her grief, that of her discourse. I have been worn to death, before now, with a widow's lamentations; and really when people make such large demands on my sympathy, they rob me of any. I fancy her natural character is lively; for I can see that when my spirits rise to any little sally, I please and amuse her. The time we find most agreeable to pass together is the hour of twilight; for I, you know, follow the example both of the owl and the nightingale, in choosing to exercise my vocal powers when I can have no other competitors; she often then leads me from one melancholy ditty to another, till both fall into a flood of tears, and darkness envelopes us. The morning, on the contrary, is quite at my own disposal, as Lady Killarney never rises till noon.

To-morrow, the coachmaker says her equipage will be ready; and on Saturday she talks of setting out for France. She travels with a suite, and rather an affectation of splendour; of course, not very

rapidly. Such a journey may establish my yet feeble health.

Lady Killarney has never been out of her own country and this. To Paris, therefore, she means to go first; and my having been there is very lucky. She had the politeness to inquire if I should object to residing in a convent during the months of her deep mourning. I assured her, that the most tranquil period of my life had been spent in a convent; and I sighed, in silence, to think how differently I had passed all the time since I left it. Yet I gathered that it was rather the novelty of the idea, than any sense of decorum, which led her to that retreat; for she asked me a thousand questions about the modes of the house I was in, all of which I answered in its favour: and with reason; for, when I inhabited a convent, hope, fear, envy, jealousy, and regret, were all alike unknown to me.—Alas! I had not loved.

Whether heart-drawn experience ren-

ders Lady Killarney clear-sighted, I know not; but she often hints suspicions of my mind being possessed with a single object. I will not understand her. The sad secret of my life shall rest in your bosom and my own, lest she should construe indiscretion into vice. This severe judgment prevents many women from stopping, while yet only indiscreet. "Shall we endure the censure, and not enjoy the indulgence?" cries every weak mind to itself. Alas! they have but to sin, to know that the silent condemnation of an unceasing monitor is a torture, to which the aspersions of a malicious world must be peace.

I am relieved to find that accident has carried my Lord so far north. I know he would never allow me to quit the kingdom; and my heart turns towards him with a regret so tender, as convinces me of the sad necessity of getting out of his reach. Alas! I should not dare to act in opposition to his will, were he here to insist upon my obedience.

I leave it to you to send him the inclosed, to reconcile him to my departure. Yet I think that it may be as well to conceal the place of my destination; of course the name of the lady whom I accompany. Chance, dear cruel chance, has of late thrown me so often in his way—my own weak heart—I ought ever to dread it. But when the sea divides us, surely I shall be safer, though less happy.

Oh, my dear Amelia! my first, my best, my only friend, believe, that on whatever soil, or in whatever situation fortune may throw me, your affection will still be my reliance, and let our hearts remain yet undivided. Why should I sink into this presaging style?—as if I thought that the sea would be my grave. Do not eighty miles separate us as effectually as eight hundred?

Do not conclude from this, that I am unwilling to go: but what vehicle, however splendid, can give me half the pleasure while it carries me from you and

Lord Westbury, that the commonest would if it conveyed me to either?

I may claim, too, the allowance made for invalids; for indeed, my dear, I am yet one,

Adieu!

LETTER LXII.

THE hazardous situation in which I have been frequently placed of late, my dearest Lord, demands an exertion of fortitude on my part, which a nature so proud and delicate as that I now address, must continually have expected from me. You have too often beheld the creature of your choice living at variance with her own soul, and ready every moment to sink under a struggle death alone can equal. Were that the certain termination of my sufferings, I should not murmur. Of all which may follow the pang of mortality, I cherish a hallowed hope: of all that may follow our separation—ah, God!

In my long and lonely days and nights of anguish and reflexion, the fluctuating billows of the obscure and uncertain future now seem to bear my wretched heart impetuously towards, and now forever from, you: nor can I calculate which will ultimately be its destiny. Yet that painful and uncertain destiny I am reduced to dare; for I cannot resolve any longer to live under the rebuke of my own conscience. I have (could you ever have believed that I should do so?) prayed for your temporary absence from London, that I might wholly escape from your knowledge. The remembrance of the peril from which you once rescued me in this town, ought to guard me from ever being again in a situation which malice itself could misconstrue. Yet, oh! recollect, that wherever I may be, my eyes and my heart will always follow you; and while I continue silent, think me safe, though miserable.

Mrs. Forrester is bound by every tie of honour, feeling, and friendship, to

keep my secret; nor will I imagine that you can so far forget the obligation you have conferred, as to tax her gratitude. Adieu, adieu! Oh, pity, applaud, and love forever,

Your

CECILIA!

LETTER LXIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

AFTER a most tedious journey we are magnificently lodged in the convent St. ——. It is now only that I can judge of the advantages which the rich and great have over those who are undistinguished. What is there so fascinating in a title? The commonest traveller pays at an inn in the same proportion for every accommodation; but when was a plebeian ever provided with any, till my Lord or my

Lady had rolled off with the best horses and best bows of not only the landlord, but his whole family?

Not a town could we enter without every token of respect being shown to us from the Irish officers; many of whom, directly or indirectly, knew Lady Killarney. I was constantly deputed to receive their compliments; and as your poor Cecilia, too, might have ten thousand a-year, the visitors, in general, were not wanting in their devoirs. It would have gratified me much to have surveyed the cathedrals, pictures, and other objects of taste; but it would have been highly improper for a widow to do so; and had I once appeared with any of Lady Killarney's suite, I felt assured that I should have sunk to that level. My pride was therefore maintained at the expense of my curiosity.

Before I embarked with this lady, I never reflected on her singular mode of passing her widowhood. Yet I know not what sense of shame it was that

I felt in myself whenever she attracted notice (and notice enough has she attracted): an intuitive delicacy made me suddenly alive to the strange impropriety of this journey. Then, to choose Paris as a scene of retirement!—people have mighty odd notions. It is true that our present residence is highly respectable, but it is likewise very remarkable; which I am tempted to suppose to be the fair widow's reason for fixing on it. She exists but by talking of herself, and engrossing the attention of all around her. I was surprised to see her so eager, during the journey, to examine all the English papers, till I discovered that she sought only the paragraphs where her departure was spoken of: and certainly some literary scribbler takes pains to indulge her Ladyship's rage for celebrity.

Her caprice is often intolerable, and her romance of temper almost weakness. She tells me that she is a great physiognomist; and has, through life, been determined in her choice both of lovers and

friends by the cast of their countenances. To confirm this, she assured me that it was neither my merit, nor Mrs. Granville's, which gave me a preference over many young ladies who were introduced to her. No: it was "the soft sensibility of my features; the interesting delicacy of my manners; the low and touching sweetness of my voice." I am not able to persuade her that my apparent condition is not a disguise. "I am infinitely too elegant and accomplished to have been only a governess to children; my very mien carries something superior to any subordinate employment. She is positive there is something mysterious in my fate: she sees it in my absent, inattentive air; in the sighs I vainly would stifle: she hears it in the melting languor of my voice when I sing: she entreats to know what afflicts me: she has her sorrows, too, but I must win her confidence by bestowing mine." What a poor weak wretch am I become: while Lady Killarney made this romantic extravagant ha-

rangue, I had the greatest difficulty to keep my own secret, or suppress the tears which this soothing address brought to my eyes. Nevertheless I gravely assured her, "that her skill in physiognomy had for once failed: since I had been born in the rank in which she found me, and had no secret to unfold, no sorrow to deplore." She gradually assumed a cold and haughty air as I spoke, and has spent less of her time with me, and more with her woman, from that moment. Perhaps my prudence might be overstrained. I rather think that I was wrong in repelling her: a generous motive alone could induce her to urge such a subject. Ah! her heart, like mine, may be struggling with a secret sorrow which confidence would lighten. Yet, no: she is not that kind of character: of course, my resolute silence is happy for myself. Could I once unfold my heart's dear story; once recapitulate all those little events so interesting to myself, and perhaps myself only, how might I revive and cherish sentiments

which I ought to bury, if I cannot cure. I already think only of one being, and want but the privilege to talk of no other. Perhaps, after all Lady Killarney's flattering speeches, she might not credit my relation. Ah! who but the happy woman that has called forth those virtues, can believe such tenderness, generosity, and constancy, ever inhabited the heart of man? Too rich is such fuel for a flame that burns in vain, and by confinement only glows more brightly.

What dismal scenes does my fancy sometimes picture:—long years of banishment, tears, constraint, and dependence. Lady Westbury is nearly as young as myself; her constitution naturally good; her heart (that tender seat of the most corroding maladies) impenetrable to sorrow. It is surely, then, my duty to struggle against a weakness which so many circumstances concur to render unfortunate. It was this consideration alone that induced me to leave England; but, I know not how, every lengthening mile

seemed only to bring me nearer to Lord Westbury. Conflict warms the imagination too much, ever to regulate the feelings. Yet what do I not owe to this generous lover, who sacrifices all pursuits, forgets all inequalities? An unshaken constancy is the least, and it is likewise the most, I dare grant to him. Yes, dear, generous Westbury, I will still allow thee this! thou couldst not inspire, nor I imbibe, a common passion. True to the only vow I ever made, I must cease to be any thing when I cease to be thine.

Lady Killarney, whose religious opinions seem very fluctuating, attends mass. I yesterday chose to go to Lord Winchester's chapel, where I saw his lady, and their only daughter. Lady Diana Selwyn is one of the most lovely young women I ever beheld: beautiful as Lady Westbury herself, with an air of delicacy and sensibility that gives her the advantage. I was vexed, when I had been fascinated with this charming creature, to find that Lady Killarney did not mean to

receive the visits of the family. She has not assigned any reason. It is certain, however, that they have taken no notice of her, though all our countryfolks in Paris have made due inquiries, themselves excepted. Lady Winchester has a most forbidding countenance; and perhaps her physiognomy does not please my capricious peeress.

Adieu!

LETTER LXIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

IN what an unaccountable manner do those discoveries sometimes flash upon you in a moment, which your whole life would not enable you to make. Who could have supposed, after having been worried by Lady Killarney to accompany her to mass, that I should, among the novices, fix my eyes at once upon Miss Fermor.

I leave you to judge if Fenelon himself would have had any chance of being heard, had he even been intent on converting me. I longed most impatiently for the conclusion of the service, and then eagerly advanced to the lovely girl. I spoke in English, and very low—"I will spare your expressive eyes, my dear young friend, all further anxiety: I know that you must have suffered severely since we parted: how eagerly have I sought only to console you. Conceal your agitation, you have wept too much already: dry your tears; their cause can only be known to one who would die rather than expose you to malignity or censure—one who greatly pities your inexperienced youth, and thinks a fault like yours too often punishes itself." The sweet girl still wept bitterly; and my tears are so ready on all occasions, that they streamed fast enough on this. I learned from others that she had assumed the first habit at her own choice; of course, no restraint was laid on her actions. The prioress seemed rather pleased

at my wishing to be a good deal with her, as my voice, it seems, has charmed the nuns, who are all seized with a fancy of adding me to their fraternity.

Our tearful rencounter had not, however, escaped the notice of Lady Killarney, whose spirit of romance was awakened by it. She made every inquiry in the house; but no one knew more of Miss Fermor than her family and name; and that she lately came from England to take the veil, bringing letters of recommendation from a priest in London, who was brother to the prioress. Curiosity urged the inquisitive peeress now to sift me; but I dared not satisfy her in any other manner than by owning the young novice to have been one of my pupils. That there was a secret between us Lady Killarney had discovered; and that she could neither by entreaty, nor bribe, find it out, offended her.

To show me her pique, she invited and now constantly associates with a wild bold girl who boards here, of the same

name with myself. Not that I think she has the same claim to it; for Miss Fermor tells me, that the hoyden is a natural daughter of the dissolute Lady Leyburne, who shuts her up here to bury the disgrace, as well as to keep out of her sight a daughter who cannot but remind her that she is no longer young. Eliza Rivers has a levity which a cloister cannot abate, and a face pretty enough to make the seclusion necessary. She has as many tricks as Tony Lumpkin; and, amidst a thousand absurdities, knows how to be diverting. But did the widow of Mr. Fitzmaurice retire into a convent only to be diverted?—so, however, it appears. As Miss Eliza has for years borne the appellation of Miss Rivers, they all call me Miss Cecilia, to distinguish us. Be careful how you direct to me: it would give me inexpressible vexation did this hoyden get a letter of mine, as she would make it the universal jest.

When I had an opportunity of being alone with Miss Fermor, I told her of my

inquiries for her in London; and found, to my great surprise, that she did not know till that moment either of the death of Lady Austin, or that she had bestowed her fortune on Monro. Indifferent as she appeared to both those events, her tears flowed apace when I assured her that Mrs. Monro expressed sincere concern for her strange flight. “Unhappy Maria,” sighed she, “thou wert once the sole object of my envy, now only of my compassion! May my fortune become an atonement to you for my involuntary injustice, and may your base husband conceal as cautiously all his other projects, as he did that which ruined me! If I had not the most ample conviction, my dear madam,” continued the sweet girl, turning to me, “of your tenderness and candour, how should I summon resolution to own that the fascinating arts of a cruel wretch made all your pious and prudent advice of no avail? It is true that I, for some days after you left me, avoided Mr. Monro with a caution which seemed

at once to chagrin and surprise him. He soon guessed that I must have advised with some one older and wiser than myself; and at first, I believe, feared his wife to have been my confidante: but afterwards his suspicions fell on you. He watched to speak to me alone, early and late; and unless I had betrayed that I had some reason for avoiding him, I could not do so always. The first moment he could find, he reproached me with treachery and ingratitude, in a manner which pierced my heart. He assured me that he had a great mind to expose the artful woman who had robbed my character of its beautiful simplicity. In short, he had the wickedness to affirm that your strictness of principle extended not to yourself, as you had corresponded during your stay in our house with a nobleman, to whom you went on leaving it. He assured me that Lady Austin herself would confirm this assertion if I asked her."

Judge of my confusion, Amelia!—yet this let me into a secret. I now plainly

saw that it had been Monro who, to escape an observation like mine, had pointed the suspicions of Lady Austin towards my exact correspondent, and defamed me. Miss Fermor, perhaps willing to prove how little credit she now gave to Monro's aspersions, never once raised her eyes; otherwise she too surely had seen that they were not entirely without foundation.—Is she not a sweet girl?

“ I confess,” continued she, “ what he said surprised and staggered me. I had seen you often receive letters too finely written to be those of a lady: I had observed you tremble, sigh, and weep over them: in short—for why should I seek to excuse my credulity—I gave credit to his slanders. Yet could I not find one motive for the care you took of me, but what did honour to your principles. However, as he now had regained my confidence, I repeated to him my conversation with you as sincerely as I had to you that which I previously held with

him. The glow of detected guilt to my deluded eyes seemed excited by generous disdain. He observed, with great bitterness, that your dreadful opinion of other people, showed the corruption of your own mind: but, musing a little, he affected to discover a deeper motive—‘Doubtless, my sweet cousin,’ cried the traitor, ‘this governess of yours was employed by some of the licentious set among whom she now lives, to instill prejudices into your ductile mind against your real friends, that they might seduce your innocence. Nothing is more likely than that Lady Austin detected her, and therefore so suddenly sent her from you. I now recollect something she said, which confirms my opinion. Indeed, my dear, I am sorry that the sensibility of my soul for my little cousin’s bitter tears, made me bring such a suspicion on myself; and what will my Maria say when she hears how you have questioned us both?’ In the innocence of my heart, I implored pardon of the savage for having suspected

him of the black design even then throbbing at his cruel heart, and glowing on his cheek. I implored him yet to prevail upon his wife to pity and protect me. 'Oh, no,' cried he, 'Amelia! I can do no more. You must now study to reconcile yourself to my aunt's insupportable humours.' Insupportable, indeed, returned I, bursting into tears; but can you leave me to waste away in misery, for having erred in judgement? Think of my youth and inexperience—feel for, forgive me:—he clasped me in his arms, and thus hid from my sight the face where exultation might be too plainly depicted. Again we discussed the projected elopement. Mrs. Monro was then in the country with her mother, whose protection of me he engaged to secure. Lady Austin, in the interim, tormented me worse than ever, and often threw me into despair. Ah, I ought—I with shame and sorrow own that I ought—to have suspected the tender consolations Monro daily lavished on me. He promised to

ride into the country and bring back his lady to receive me. In effect, he absented himself four days, the hours of which I counted with more than a lover's impatience; for the misery of my home gave me a double cause for it.

“ Monro again made his appearance, but alone. He found means to give me a letter which he, perhaps, had fabricated; for I now doubt not but that he both forged his wife's name and her hand, to betray an unhappy, unsuspecting victim. It expressed a tender sense of my melancholy situation, and spoke of the elopement as a scheme of her own; but advised me not to wait her return, as her mother's health grew every day worse, and she could not think of leaving her: she added that she had given her husband strict charge of me, and under his protection I might safely escape to her mother; who would receive me with open arms, and with whom I should be out of reach of discovery.

“Blinded by my evil genius, or rather my weak heart, I never doubted for a moment the authenticity of this epistle. Alas, how can I excuse my imprudence? Yet you must yourself have loved to excess before you can guess how reluctantly we doubt, and how readily we punish ourselves for daring to do so. How was it possible for me, whose nature was yet untainted with the arts of a designing world, to believe that a man of condition and character, possessed of an ample fortune, and, above all, my kinsman—married to the woman whom he said he adored, and one who certainly adored him—should be capable of adding new miseries to a fate already so calamitous as mine?—of plunging me into guilt, into infamy; of robbing me of those poor means of existence which I daily purchased by my tears; of cutting me off from this world and all its promises, ere yet I was sixteen!—Merciful God! hast thou made as much difference in the human race as the animal?

Is it possible that this monster should be of the same species with the harmless wretch whom he injured?"

This heart-drawn apostrophe of Miss Fermor's was extremely affecting; not that I impute the guilt of her ruin solely to Monro: Lady Austin is the primary cause of it, by damping the rising promise of Amelia's youth, and throwing a languor and sickliness over those natural hopes which might otherwise have counteracted all the artifices of her cruel nephew.—What punishment is enough for such a woman?

Miss Fermor resumed her story.—“ In the implicit belief of this letter, I hastily answered it; gratefully accepting Maria's kindness, and conforming to all Mr. Monro's arrangements. He directed me on the following night to steal out of the area door, near the hour of bed-time; and forbade my taking a single thing with me to retard my flight, or excite suspicion. The interval elapsed in conflicts of fear and hope, which left not reason

power to suggest any thing to save me. Twelve at night came at length, and I descended the stairs: the servants were all in a distant hall, and I reached the door unseen. Here my heart sunk within me: I several times stole back—I trembled—I lingered—nor seemed to have power to pass, for the last time, the threshold of the only wretched home which I had known from infancy. I am not sure that I should at last have had courage to go, had I not heard the housekeeper coming to see the door fastened, as was her custom. Dreading to be found in a place which I never had any occasion to pass through, I flew hastily up the steps of the area, and rushed into the square with such terror and rapidity, that I ran against Mr. Monro without knowing him, and hardly could recollect his voice when he spoke. I now remember his carefully locking the area gate, and throwing over me a gay, striped, silk petticoat and a pink satin cloak, that my dress might not, he said, make me known by the hackney-coachman. He impa-

tiently urged me to walk on, for he had not dared, he told me, to keep a coach in waiting there, lest it should cause inquiry. At the end of the street one was, he said, on the stand; and being called in the usual way could not betray me, were even a reward offered by advertisement.—Oh, see how cautious vice can be, and how unsuspecting virtue!

“To walk seemed, however, an effort beyond my strength. At length I reached the hackney-coach, which he ordered to drive to Bloomsbury-square, observing that it would be advisable to take another there, lest the coachman should have remarked my tremor. That, indeed, seemed now to have absorbed my reason: I hardly understood what he said to me, and was at once feverish, sick, and sleepy. I alighted in Bloomsbury-square, and Mr. Monro dismissed that coach while I waited in the fresh air, which a little revived me; but another coach driving to the stand, he took it. I know not what direction he then gave; but we

soon arrived at our journey's end; and when I attempted to get out, my limbs, as if conscious of the danger, sunk under the weight. Mr. Monro was obliged to lift me into an elegant parlour, where an elderly lady hastened to receive me, as one by whom I had been impatiently expected. I did not recollect this lady; but concluding from all she said, that she knew both Mr. Monro, his wife, and myself, I endeavoured to conquer my fear and bashfulness. I soon understood that it was to her he meant to entrust me, till I could go into the country.

“Whether a cordial they had given me had some chemical quality, or that it was merely the sense of a danger escaped which affected me, I know not; but, from the very depth of tremor and despondency, I found my spirits rise to a freedom which I never felt till that luckless moment.

“The lady informed me that a little repast prepared would on this occasion be served in the 'drawing-room, whither,

of course, we adjourned; and my watch showed me that it was two o'clock when we sat down to table. A noise under the window soon interrupted us: our hostess, laying her finger on her lip, extinguished the lights, and softly unbarred the shutter. We all then distinctly heard some foot-pads robbing an unhappy straggler: their threats and execrations made me in terror for the man's life. Intuitively I clasped Monro's arm; and, forgetting that I was in safety, drew him back agonised with apprehension. My trembling and tears, however, subsided when our hostess told us that the robbers had contented themselves with the poor man's money. When I hinted, that, had her servants been active, the traveller might have escaped, she appeared to me very selfish, for she urged that this interference would of course expose her to the malice of an enraged banditti, and the solitary situation of her house made any effort of hers a desperate kind of virtue. 'And now I think of that, cousin

Monro,' cried she, 'how do you mean to get home to-night; you have neither servants nor carriage?'—'Oh, do not trouble yourself about me,' cried he, gaily; 'I am always provided for these gentlemen.' He then drew a small pistol from the sleeve of his coat: an argument ensued; on his part of the necessity, on ours of the danger, of resistance: every word awakened in my soul a fear which the past scene did not fail to keep alive. My companion conjured him not to venture: I seconded her with tears and entreaties. I told him, with truth told him, that the little comfort which I now owed to his benevolence would be for ever lost should any danger to himself ensue. Possessed by these ideas, my heart awakened my imagination: *that* laid him dead at my feet; the blood, now vivid in his cheek, oozing through a thousand wounds.—I myself implored him to stay; and thus, perhaps, might be said to accelerate my own ruin. He turned, and looked intently upon me:

he hesitated.—Alas! in the tear which then flowed into his eye, the last particle of his virtue evaporated.

“ The lady of the house now observed, ‘ that she had only the spare chamber meant for me ; but that if I would partake hers, the other should be at his service.’ I would have slept on straw to save him any risque, and of course readily accepted her proposal. I was lulled to rest by a train of delightful images which took possession of my mind for the *first*—alas, for the *last* time, too !

“ Oh, you who can lament, though you could not save her, pity a poor, unconsenting, helpless wretch! What drugs had been subtly administered to me I know not : it is certain, so deep a stupor followed, that neither grief nor recollection had power to keep my eyes open. Yet when at length I waked, I saw the projector of this iniquity quietly resting by my side. I became speechless with horror and despair. Oh, what a blessing at that moment should I have thought

madness! I first raised my eyes, in all the bitterness of unmerited misery, to the God whom it is but right to own that I had forsaken, and then fixed them on the savage insensible. He now, too, awakened; but holding him at the extent of my arm, I froze him with a glance.

“What power was there in language to express injuries like mine! I therefore uttered not a word; my eyes were at once opened; I more justly reviewed the past, and found it as impossible to forgive myself as the destroyer.

“I heard all he chose to say with that vacant kind of patience which gave him hopes that I might, in time, be appeased. Alas! it never once occurred to him that I was only considering how to rid myself of a being which his treachery had rendered insupportable.

“I arose, and, retreating to an arm-chair at the further side of the room, gave way to all my own grievous reflexions—a black and hideous train!—The past, the present, and the future, appear-

ed in a manner at once before me. I now began to think the miserable home which I had voluntarily abandoned, a paradise, and Lady Austin my guardian angel. I now beheld myself without a friend, a habitation, or a hope—nay, even without innocence. But, oh, there was yet a pang to which even these must be ease! He who had robbed me of all was not an enemy! Ah, no! he was ‘my companion, my counsellor, my own familiar friend!’

“I saw in this terrible moment no alternative but suicide. Detestable to myself, I yet dared to meditate filling up the measure of my iniquity, by sending, uncalled, before the judgement-seat of God, the soul that withered within me.

“Having thus determined, I became calmer. I called together my wandering thoughts, like one whose days were appointed, and humbled a heart but too much disposed to elevate itself;—resolving to punish the wretch who had thus entrapped me, by perpetually observing

a vacant air, and the most disdainful silence.

“ Perhaps had I studied to torment him, I could not so effectually have succeeded. He left not any effort untried to move me: he knelt, persuaded, provoked, by turns; at length he even threatened me. Had he then reflected, he must have known how well I understood him; for I crossed my hands over my bosom, demanding as it were, by a look, what he had left me to fear?

“ He knew not how to manage, or what to make of me; and at length left me to the care of her who had assisted in my seduction.

“ I perceived, in the various changes which his mind had undergone, that a concealed fear ever predominated. Should I escape, and have courage to face Lady Austin, he knew his hopes from her lost for ever, whether she gave me her fortune or not. A silence like mine left him wholly at a loss as to my plans; but, to prevent my executing any that might

interfere with his views, as well as to secure leisure to himself to assuage my deep sense of injury, he judged it proper to order me into close imprisonment.

“The woman to whose care I was left now addressed me with all her little execrable arts. I heard her not—I saw her not. Lost in contemplation on my own faults and misfortunes, I suffered her to talk on, and stared at her without comprehending any thing. I observed her tell the maid that the dose must have affected my head, and she should not wonder if I never recovered my reason. I improved on this hint; and recollected that it would be my only chance for escaping from this den of sin: by my wild starts, I therefore sought continually to strengthen this opinion.

Mr. Monro, though he often came to see, was visibly afraid of me; for he never remained one moment alone in my room.

Day after day made no visible change in me, and the gay monster soon grew

disgusted with so melancholy a spectacle. The women, to whom he left me, for a little while obeyed his orders; they, in turn, grew weary of a care so strict, and relaxed it by degrees. My food was always brought ready carved, with only a spoon. At first the mistress attended; then merely a servant—servants ill perform any office where no eye superintends them. The maid who brought my dinner would often leave me alone; and, at length, I observed that she even neglected to lock the door. I affected not to see or know any thing, but I only waited my opportunity.

“ Having ventured several attempts, which only convinced me that I was no longer strictly watched, one day, after having made sure that the servants were at dinner, I gained the street-door undiscovered. To avoid the parlour-windows, I rushed out the other way, uncertain whither it would conduct me. I had hardly, however, walked a hundred yards before I perceived the Foundling Hospital. Crowds of people

were going one way ; among whom I mingled, as the only mode of avoiding suspicion, or securing protection if discovered. Time and space are unobserved by the wretched ; and I suddenly found myself at the door of Sadler's-Wells, hardly knowing how I got there. The crowd entered into the gay theatre in search of pleasure, while I followed the cut of the New River in search of death. I waited only till the close of evening should remove the eye of observation. That time at length came. The busy hum of men ceased : Night cast around her melancholy mantle, as if willing to conceal the horrors of my fate. I looked eagerly round, but not a creature was near me. I now sunk on my knees, in impassioned despair, to implore the pardon of Almighty God for a crime which my peculiar fate obliged me to premeditate ; and trusting my cause to his justice, I asked not for revenge. Instantly I plunged into the river ; but my garments causing me to rise, I struggled with agonies of which I had no previous appre-

hension : involuntarily I shrieked ; and it happened that some gentlemen had been drinking in a little summer-house close to me, one of whom, having outstaid the rest, was asleep on the table, from which my cries roused him. He soon summoned aid, and came to see if it was possible to save me. A by-stander leaped in, and, catching me as I again rose, dragged me out by my garments. My extreme youth, and perhaps some remnant of gentility preserved in my dress, for external circumstances are not without an effect even at moments like these, interested those about me. They laid me on the grass, and a light now being brought, one spectator, more skilful than the rest, opened a vein in my arm, while another of the company poured brandy down my throat. I soon a little revived ; but a sullen despair was the only emotion remaining in my nature ; nor did I thank the officious strangers : on the contrary, I assured them that they had only delayed a death which they could not pre-

vent. He who bled me proved to be a priest of the catholic religion; the best and most impressive of men. He boldly remonstrated on the insult we offered to God, in thus disclaiming his providence, while we dared to exchange our temporal for eternal punishment, and our misfortunes for crimes. The God whose cause he asserted gifted the speaker; my soul melted at his words, and I at once became grateful to him, both for his assistance and reproof. The holy father, on observing this effect, exhorted me with a zeal worthy his venerable character to confide to him the griefs which I thought insupportable; assuring me that if external aid might render my fate endurable, it should not be wanting; and if spiritual consolation could support me through the inevitable evils of life, he was ready to impart it. Had you seen the apostolic, venerable man, you would, with me, have thought his intervention almost supernatural.

“The miserable are but too ready to complain; and I related, without disguise,

my short, sad story, to which all my hearers listened eagerly ; one of whom vehemently demanded my name, and at length repeated it, as known to him. I did not deny what I had hesitated to acknowledge ; when the stranger informed me that he was my father's only brother ; after whose death he was so insulted by Sir Godfrey and his lady as to have made a vow never to have any thing to do with or for me ; a vow which he had so religiously kept that he knew not whether I was dead or living. — ' However,' added he, ' child, what all thy mother's fine grand relations would not do for thee, thou mayest owe to thy father's poor ones, whom they so much despised. I have saved enough by trade to live without it ; and, if you behave well to me, you may call this a lucky and a happy day, since it gives you an uncle.' — ' Ah me, a lucky day !' sighed my heart. ' Can wealth bestow oblivion ? and what else can make me happy ? ' I, however, with gratitude acknowledged a kindness that did not give me any right

to criticise the manner. Indeed, the least instance of affection might easily overwhelm a heart so long accustomed only to the reverse.

“The spiritual consolations of the holy father I have mentioned, had a great effect upon my mind. He gradually reconciled me to life; and taught me, at the foot of the altar, to weep for my sins, and implore the mercy of the Almighty.—In fine, I owe to him that blessed sense of religion which enables me to consecrate to God the faculties I yet can call my own. A long illness, occasioned by my remaining in my wet clothes, made this generous priest my only companion and comfort.

“During this period Mr. Fermor supplied me every assistance; but, alas! he had not delicacy enough to know where most I suffered. He imagined that I ought to be happy in finding a living—I, who could hardly endure to live at all. Sometimes he treated my melancholy in a way which a man of a gross mind and habits alone could treat it; by imputing it to

the loss of a base lover, whom I might so easily have retained. Nor did he know, nor could he be taught, that I was sullied and lost for ever in my own eyes.

“ I need not tell you what this conduct made me endure; especially as my uncle was ungenerous enough to entertain me frequently with accounts of what he had done or intended to do for me, now my mother’s fine relations had thrown me on the world. Every acknowledgement that I was able to make proved too little to satisfy his appetite for praise.—In short, I soon found that I had only exchanged one kind of bondage for another, and, oh, at what a price!——Where was now my virtue, peace, and consciousness of rectitude!

“ A number of visitants, of the description of my uncle, frequented his house, among whom I was obliged frequently to be seen. His and their oblique hints at the fatal circumstances of my little story, their eternal staring, and low

curiosity, pierced my soul with internal agonies beyond endurance. I felt every hour that the wretched man, to whom I was destined to owe every thing, sacrificed the feelings and character of an unfortunate kinswoman, to the little vanity of publishing his own generosity.

“ Yet still the society of the pious priest was left me, who had great influence over Mr. Fermor ; when, as if to render my situation intolerable, one of my uncle’s most intimate friends was inhuman enough to fall in love with me, as it is called. This man could not be less than fifty ; tall, thin, swarthy. His clothes, such as they were, often seemed covered with snuff : nor were his intellects much improved by having spent most of his life in a warehouse in Thames-street ; which he had just exchanged for a villa next door to my uncle’s, at Islington. I need not say any thing of the character of the man who resolved to marry me, knowing, as Mr. Tomkins well did, my sad story : but he had saved a very pretty for-

tune in trade; half of which he offered, in the generosity of his heart, to settle upon his wife; and to exchange his whisky for a chariot, to do her credit.

“ So magnificent an offer struck my uncle with gratitude, who accepted it at once in my name. Great was the delight with which he laid these particulars before me, who remained profoundly silent, through vexation. My not answering equally surprised and offended my benefactor, who expected me to load his generosity, no less than that of his friend, with acknowledgements. I withdrew—not to consider how I should act, but how I should declare my determination. Alas! I saw the hour was again at hand when I must be poor, forsaken, and censured. Yet death itself I should have preferred to marriage, had the husband proposed been the most amiable of mankind. A visit from the catholic priest, who I have already said had made me his convert, removed all my difficulties. He knew my uncle to be vulnerable only on

the side of religion, and undertook to convince him that it would be a kind of profanation to oblige me again to appear in the world, when God had called me to himself—that mine was a pure, a celestial vocation. This argument overruled every other in the bosom of my bigotted relation. He consented to give a sum to fix me in a provincial nunnery; and the generous priest, wishing me to be with his sister, paid the extra charge of this splendid convent. Hither then, with gratitude, I hastened; and in a few months shall gladly renounce that world in which I have already been so severe a sufferer.

“ Yet, even in this last asylum, misfortune still pursues me; and, to vary her attack, wears an amiable form. You know Mademoiselle De Sommerive. She has, in consequence of her personal deformity, been here almost from her infancy; nor is she allowed any choice but the veil. The great affection with which I have inspired her, has induced her to represent

the duties of a nun to me, in the same light they appear to herself; and as all the ladies of this house are of birth and fortune, she never imagines a nunnery to be my only melancholy resource. It is impossible not to love the gay, whimsical girl; and I have occasionally yielded to her entreaties in going into the parlour, when any of her relations came, to whom she wished to introduce me. Among them I several times saw Monsieur Vaudray, a young officer, her first cousin; and whether she had previously wrought upon his imagination by partial representations, or his heart conceived a deep and true passion, I know not, but not being able to find any reason for his pretending to adore me, I am obliged to believe that he really does so. His volatile cousin exults in her success, and says that the cloister will now have one victim the less.

“Vaudray is an only son, and his father is so anxious to see him married, that, finding I was well born, he has deigned to think me worthy of a heart

and hand which require and deserve an unsullied bride. I have insisted on my vocation, and obstinately refused Vaudray's addresses; but he still persecutes me by means of his cousin; nor can I find out any other way of silencing him than by acknowledging my cruel situation. —To whom can I entrust such a delicate communication? Mademoiselle De Sommerive is too thoughtless; and might, by divulging the secret, at once destroy my estimation in the convent, and the peace of my future life. She is, I find, impatient to present my English friend to her family. Would you allow her that happiness, I could trust to your sensibility the management of my poor mistaken lover.

“ I cannot finish my long and melancholy tale without entreating your pardon for venturing to misjudge your character; but have I not shown you how amply that fault has punished itself? Although I think I more feared to meet you than any human being, there was so much

love mingled with that fear, that, now you know all, and do not despise me, I find in your society a relief which I hardly thought this world could afford me."

Thus ended my interesting novice. I have written my fingers into an everlasting cramp, that I might give you the sad story while my mind was full of it.

How can I express my contempt for her sordid, gross uncle!—On both sides to have only odious relations! Methinks it would have been some satisfaction to have married him to Lady Austin. Could you have thought that I should compliment matrimony so ill as to name it among the greatest earthly punishments?—but it is either that or our first blessing.

I long to hear from you, and of Lord Westbury; nor is your situation an excuse for your silence.—Heaven send you safety, and a lovely boy!

Yours, ever!

LETTER LXV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

COMMEND me, my dear, to a convent, as a sovereign remedy for sorrow!—at least if I may judge by Lady Killarney. I may be a little actuated by pique, but indeed, my Amelia, I have for some time thought her very eccentric. A grief so ostentatious, that it could hardly be satisfied but by attracting attention, could not fail to shock a mind alive to true feelings. Then the parade of her journey, the anxious examination of the English newspapers, a repulsive something which even in her retiring hither bade us remember the merit of doing so, had an odd effect on my nature, by awakening a watchfulness which I should otherwise never have known, and a susceptibility that was hard to satisfy.

Here, in this apparently calm asylum,

the same ideas have occupied her. Perhaps the same have actuated me. I saw her suite retained; I saw her grief displayed: *that*, with her birth and fortune, have excited universal attention; and having raised in every body the strong desire of seeing her, she now finds as strong a desire to be seen. I am apt to believe that she would imagine the person her dearest friend who should persuade her to quit the convent; and am much deceived if she is not influenced in this instance by Miss Eliza Rivers.

There is no describing the sudden and great intimacy that wild girl has formed with Lady Killarney; almost to the exclusion of your poor Cecilia. I fancy that my prudent reserve in what respected myself, first disobliged her; and afterwards, in what related to Miss Fermor. She expected me to sacrifice that charming creature's melancholy secret to her curiosity; and finding me deaf, dumb, and insensible, she resolves to hate the woman whom she has no excuse for blam-

ing. The strange preference she has given to a girl whose volatility I might even venture to term levity, has opened my eyes.

Oh, my dear ! have I not ever dreaded the odious situation in which I have unwarily placed myself ? How often have I declared against becoming a slave—*alias* a companion.

Once again in England, and I think I shall never more submit to that degradation. In the interim, while not attached to Lady Killarney, I can patiently support her malicious preference, or her impertinent neglect. The partial, the sincere attachment of Miss Fermor, compensates to me for a thousand such slights. How, indeed, should I learn to consider that friendship as an acquisition which treachery and ingratitude alone can obtain ?

For Miss Fermor how different is my feeling ! — Unhappy, blighted human blossom ! to thee even the veil is but the least misfortune ! Had I an

affluent income, would I suffer this sweet creature thus to entomb herself!

I have not yet discovered how I shall open the eyes of her young French lover. Here it must not be. A nun has more ears than Argus ever had eyes; and Mademoiselle De Sommerive must not even conjecture why her cousin is no longer wishes the hand of Miss Fermor.

Miss Fermor has shown me many letters of Vaudray, all calculated to influence me in his favour; and I have tried to persuade her to disclose her sad secret, and receive his addresses: not that I could do so, but because I thought the modes of life would authorise her being less delicate. She sighs; and after enumerating many prudent reasons against my opinion, is unable to conceal that a remnant of tenderness for her base betrayer is among those which decide her conduct.

Mademoiselle De Sommerive is deformed and plain; but she has all the good sense incident to her own nation, as

well as its vivacity. She abhors the seclusion to which she is destined; and could her ghostly father guess at her representation of its mortifications, he would cripple her with a penance.

Indeed we entertain, my dear, from our ignorance of the interior of a convent, a very different opinion from that which a nearer knowledge creates in our minds. The vices of sense are, in a manner, excluded; but those peculiar to the mind flourish here in proportion. Envy, malice, fraud, hypocrisy, and slander, are ever found most to thrive within a cloister. It is true that here, as in wedlock, the victim is a queen till the ceremony is past, but a slave ever after. Our prioress has a high opinion of Miss Fermor's piety, and trusts to her to make a proselyte of me; but the sweet girl has too much respect for my understanding to attempt misleading me; nor do I value her peace so little as to wish to prove that faith to be erroneous which alone offers her an asylum from the severities of for-

tune. I sometimes think that the sisterhood will have better success with Lady Killarney, unless the pleasures of this world surpass those which the monks picture in the other; for she holds frequent and interesting conferences with the confessor and nuns, and is very observant of mass.

* * * * *

Do you know that I shall soon assume to myself the talent of divination? While I have been writing the above, my namesake has had the eloquence to persuade Lady Killarney to receive a visit from the most charming woman in the world. Madame St. Hermine is accordingly coming; and Lady Killarney has sent me word of this, that I might dress.

This Countess has been here, and proves much more pleasant than I expected, knowing the party who made her panegyric. Lady Killarney wore her solemn crape, adjusted with an elegant precision, which made me conjecture that she expected more visitors; and

had a face which would have persuaded you she had never smiled from the hour of Mr. Fitzmaurice's death.

A thousand times did she declare that all taste for pleasure was buried in the grave of him for whom she mourned; yet Madame De St. Hermine did not seem to think it impossible to introduce the sad widow to the world; and she varied her attacks so artfully, that I fancied at length she had waked the busy demon of society.

Adieu! Convents are not fertile in incidents, so you must accept the mere intention of entertaining you for the fact, from

Your own

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LXVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

DID I treat you as I ought, not one line from my hand would you see during your whole lying-in; but I am more charitable; and, satisfied from the silence of your husband that I may impute yours to pure idleness, I pardon it to your situation. Though we know, when absent, at best, but little of the employments of those whom we love, it is some satisfaction to have them enumerated to us. From thence we draw the dear conviction, that, however busy our friends may be, they still find time to recollect us.

I was not much mistaken, my dear, as to Lady Killarney's being sick of retirement. The benevolent Madame St. Hermine has used her utmost eloquence to convince her Ladyship that she has done, and overdone, the duties of widowhood.

Indeed, that Lady brought to her aid a very cogent argument in the person of her brother, Monsieur De Louvigny; who, if the female world here may be relied on, is the most elegant, handsome, gallant, irresistible man in the world, or in Paris—which is, in the general calculation, the very same thing. In short, Monsieur Louvigny is the rage.—Do you know, that I am obstinate enough not to see through the opera-glass of fashion.

By what I can learn, this formidable Marquis has honoured every elegant woman of every country with his addresses; and his great success in the duels which these numerous gallantries could not but occasion, has rendered husbands in general so compliant, that the few who did not at first see the attentions of the Marquis De Louvigny in the most eligible light, now feel themselves honoured in his friendship.

I have an odd fancy that this Marquis occasioned Miss Eliza Rivers's imprisonment; for she has a fluttered, awkward

air, when he is the subject of conversation. Yet, if so, she is resolved to keep her own secret.

I was yesterday introduced by Mademoiselle Sommerive to her cousin Vaudray. I could not behold this young lover without a partial interest in the welfare of a man who dared encourage so generous a passion. He, too, beheld with a very marked respect the bosom-friend of his heart's idol. Our conversation was merely general, and more than shared by the Count De Sommerive, who had a curiosity to gratify. That nobleman is about the age of Lord Westbury, handsome, graceful, and accomplished. I even think that he resembles a little in features the beloved of my heart. This resemblance, whether real or ideal, fixed my attention; and as he has travelled, and speaks English fluently (which he is very fond of speaking), he engrossed a great deal of my conversation. His sister says that he grudged every one else a word of it. These noblemen both serve under Monsieur De Lou-

vigny. I cannot even guess how I shall execute Miss Fermor's commission. It seems hardly possible that I should have a private conversation here with a young officer.

Yours,
CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

FROM cold regularity, and monastic strictness, where formal prayers, formal breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, alone reminded us that we were yet in existence, behold us launched at once into splendor, gaiety, and the world. We are on a visit at the Château de St. Hermine ;—not one of those antique villas, where the winter-wind puffs out your *bougie* at every corner—no, this is a noble, voluptuous residence, in the neighbourhood of Paris ; where saloons, panneled with looking-

glass, reflect the magnificent lustres, and Gobelin tapestry gives a second spring; where no well-rubbed floor endangers your safety from a smooth sole, but rich carpets of velvet render your entrance or departure imperceptible to the nicest ear.

I am in doubt whether the French do not most enjoy the country, if I may use the paradox, while shut up in the house at Christmas. Rousseau, I think, satirically observes that they are very fond of taking Paris along with them. I cannot but be of his opinion. It is strange these good people never recollect that we may

“Die of a rose in aromatic pain.”

Voluptuousness, as an indulgence, must be merely temporary. We are told of some Sybarite who was disturbed by the folded leaf of a flower. How, then, can these Parisians hope to find in boundless luxury a lasting enjoyment? Such a mode of life, when vernal seasons and the profusions of summer conspire to unbend the

heart, may be too favourable to pleasure— (alas! to pleasure did I say?—When did excess produce pleasure?): more especially as love, love, love, is the only language of the male sex here; which, although it may have little effect from the grandfathers, will not want influence from the grandsons. Love, however, in my opinion, loses half its charm when it is thus the general cry; and the heart soon ceases to beat at the gallantry of the most engaging of men.

Imagination is the soul of love; and the French exhaust that in embellishing their wit: they have, therefore, hardly any in reserve for their feelings. Alas! why will they bestow on their vanity a luxuriance of fancy allotted to enrich the delights of the heart?

Convinced of this, a prudent female in such company buries in her own bosom all the soft vivacity which would otherwise enliven her discourse, lest it should seem to authorise the indiscriminate attacks of these light characters

upon her virtue—at least upon her repose. And thus they deprive themselves of the esteem of women of merit, without obtaining any thing that may recompense them for its loss.

But there are a set of men even more dangerous than these; who seem to attach themselves to your understanding, and by an apparent profound, though silent, deference, gain an insight into those foibles by which the most sensible are often undone.

Both these kinds of beaux are to be found at Madame St. Hermine's. First, there is her brother, the Marquis De Louvigny—tall, handsome—sensible of it, and not unwilling that you should be so—he omits no opportunity of centering in himself that admiration which he is astonished at your not voluntarily bestowing. Then there is the Count De Sommerive—insinuating, accomplished, sentimental: handsomer than the Marquis, without ever making a pretension, and young enough to persuade you that he is incapable of

art ; yet, perhaps, not less skilled in it than if he were past the meridian of life. Vaudray, in flower of youth, silent, interesting, languishing, seems, like a true lover, to have left his five senses behind him, and to exist mechanically. To make amends, however, for this young automaton, we have the Chevalier St. Morlaix, half asthmatic and half paralytic ; yet ever gay, ever airy ; ever singing, ever rhyming ; and ever seeming ready to dance, when he is certain that you will not put him to the trial. How artfully does he powder the few hairs he has left, which powder, alas ! can never make more white. He, modest man ! demands not the deference due to his own years, but is humbly content with that familiar gaiety suitable to yours.

As to the ladies, Madame St. Hermine is rather pretty than handsome ; and so put together, that we hardly know whether God made her, or she herself. She is rather shrewd than sensible, and more gay than lively. Proud to be a widow,

and mistress of an easy fortune, she tempts Lady Killarney to set a value on her condition not very suitable, I should think, to the views of the Marquis. Then Lady Killarney is *à l'Angloise*—pale, half-undressed, and coarsely handsome; with that kind of dying delicacy that promises to waste into no delicacy at all; and an air of gallantry which invites the *tendresse* her mourning alone restrains. Lady Killarney gratifies the vanity of Louvigny by unremitting attention; and professes a boundless esteem for a man who laughs at that as a tribute which no mortal can justly claim. Madame de Montreuil, too, is of our circle; as gay and airy as her friend the Chevalier, and much of his age and temperament. She kindly diffuses the knowledge of which she, no doubt, once availed herself, and is a walking volume of the science of coquetry, as well as a moral epitome of its effects: for who can look at her and fail to tremble for the fatal moment when Love, Youth, and the Graces, shall take their eternal leave—of the face at least!

When dimples must become hollows, and the roses which expire on the cheeks can be only re-animated by those in the pocket! I protest that this lady would cure me of levity, were it the first of my failings. We have Mademoiselle her daughter likewise, who has just emerged from the confines of a cloister. With a premature knowledge of every thing, she has preserved the dangerous grace of simplicity. Thus with a mind seared to the world, and beauty enough to secure admiration, this young lady will be thrown upon it by marrying the old Chevalier; to which plan she so readily conforms, as to convince me that her heart has already lost all the instinctive virtues, which are often beyond extirpation, if our worldly monitors are not careful to root them out in childhood.

Oh, my dear, how is my nature harassed—how is my temper changed, since I tried, in the above gay imitation of the French style, to depict our circle! It is well that

love gives me resolution, for dreadfully do I want it on every other occasion. Why, why did I consent to swell the suite of an insolent woman of quality!—one to whom I was an absolute stranger! Oh, how could I blindly consent to follow Lady Killarney into a country where I was without a friend, till sure that I should find one in herself! This is, however, my situation; and till I can change, I must learn to bear it. Lady Killarney has it too much in her power to make me miserable, though to make me happy can never be in it.

I sometimes think that I owe this strange and sudden alteration in Lady Killarney to some jealous whim of Madame St. Hermine. I cannot but perceive that lady to be intent on attaching the Count De Sommerive, and little did she expect to find, in a woman insignificant by birth as well as situation, a troublesome and dangerous rival. From the moment I saw the Count at the convent, I observed in his manner a marked regard for me,

but it was not obvious, troublesome, nor impertinent—it was the *devoir* of a high-bred, elegant man, which I might, or might not, appropriate.

Monsieur De Sommerive has affected an anxious desire to improve himself in English; or rather, perhaps, he made that the pretext for addressing himself almost wholly to me. In my own language, indeed, I could not have a competitor, as Lady Killarney has a strong accent of her country. Madame St. Hermine, unluckily, does not understand it; and, like every other narrow-minded person, concluded herself principally concerned in all our conversation. I leave you to judge whether she did not take a violent aversion to your Cecilia. The Count, however, by a superiority in his own mind, preserved such an ascendancy over hers, that she fretted in silence till she found out how to revenge herself indirectly through Lady Killarney.

The gaming here is quite ruinous; and to me so insupportable, both in itself

and its consequences, that I rather chose, on the plea of indisposition, to spend whole evenings in my own apartment, than by joining the company expose myself to an importunity which the thoughtless Lady Killarney rather encourages. Though by this imprudence she herself had obliged me to withdraw, still she found it necessary to have some rest for her restless mind, and then would have me back again. I have a spirit far beyond my fortune—a spirit that could not descend so low as to remind this strange woman of an inequality of circumstances which she so well knew already.

When first I formed this unhappy engagement, I thought the terms which Lady Killarney offered ample, for I knew not then the extravagance and caprice of her disposition. She is in every thing hard to be pleased, and in nothing more than in dress. Unluckily she is no less whimsical about mine than her own. Whatever does not strike her agreeably, she banishes her sight at once, nor heeds the ex-

pense to which she consequently puts me. You will smile when I add, that whatever I think I look particularly well in, is sure to offend her eyes. While she treated me with distinction, my complaisance, unluckily, knew no bounds; and now she will have it her own way. But were she the most polite of women, I could not afford to gratify her.

Yet because she chose me as a gentlewoman, and introduces me as her friend, she will not visit without me, or suffer any one to treat me impertinently but herself. I am ungrateful enough to impute this to her pride, which will not thus admit an implied affront to her own consequence. Be that as it will, this provoking and single instance of her complaisance involves me whole evenings in expensive parties at play; and as the whole company are much more skilful than myself, I cannot avoid losing.

I extorted a promise from her yesterday, by partly owning the truth, that she would prevent my being improperly im-

portuned, and then joined the company. I found Vaudray had arrived in the interim, and, knowing his motive for the visit, blushed so deeply at sight of him, that the Count De Sommerive never took his eyes off me or his young cousin, and thus increased the embarrassment of both. My mind, being anxiously pre-occupied, I seldom understood, and rarely answered, those around me. In the evening, with a head by that time really aching, I retreated to a sopha at one end of the room, while the company seated themselves at the other to play. Vaudray cast an eager eye on me as he played, and losing as quick as he could, disengaged himself: then hastening towards me, with some trifling compliments, he took a seat on the same sopha.

“I am told, Madam,” said he, in a low and agitated tone of voice, “that the heart of your lovely friend Miss Fermor is open to you, and of course that my fate is in your hands. There is a sweetness in your manners which will soften your

communication : but oh ! be generous in being concise !—This mode, the formality, the delay—Oh ! say at once, why, why cannot the angelic Miss Fermor renounce the most melancholy fate allotted to any of her sex, to make happy a heart which she only can make so ? I fear that you are not acquainted with my irresistible passion : you may be among those who superstitiously seek to deprive your friend and her lover of the world at one moment.”

“ I am but little known to Monsieur Vaudray, or he would never judge me so unfairly : If I cannot wish you success, Sir, it is from more generous motives. Miss Fermor’s charms and merits justify your utmost partiality ; and she is too sensible of what she owes to your attachment, to withhold all the distinction in her power. It is therefore she conjures me to inform you, that she never can be yours.”

“ Ah, Madam ! what do you tell me ? ” cried he, in great agitation—

"*can* never be mine? Rather say, that she *will* never be mine!"

"To show the excess of her esteem, Sir, she throws herself upon your honour. She bids me add, that an implicit confidence, pardonable only to her youth and inexperience, has already cost her both happiness and fortune."

"Fortune!" sighed he: "Have I ever sought for fortune with her?"

"I am even commanded, if necessary, to be yet more explicit.—That confidence has cost her" (and I blushed as if the error had been my own) "all that is dear and precious to noble minds. Recollect yourself, Sir (seeing him fall into an agony of tears); struggle from this moment against a vain passion; and respecting as you ought the sincerity of this dear unfortunate, intrude no more into an asylum yet sacred even to the wretch who thus early robbed her of every other."

Tears and agitation now almost choaked me: but his face was in a manner convulsed with strong emotion.

“ I thank you, Madam,” cried he at length: “ Painful as this confidence must be, I thank you: nor am I less indebted to your friend for the killing candour. Render to her, in your own words, the acknowledgements which your heart will tell you mine must offer; and deign to add, that, far from violating the sanctuary which encloses the only woman I can ever adore, I will study to withdraw from thence my wishes; lest too tender, too generous a compassion for me, should add bitterness to her fate.”

He arose, and, hastily bowing, quitted the room, as I supposed to recover himself; but I was so wholly lost in reconsidering our conversation, as scarcely to observe that the company had broken up in disorder.

I afterwards understood, that the sofa on which I sat, being behind the Count's chair—(I had chosen the seat because I thought he could not see me)—was opposite to a mirror. His watchful eyes perceived, from the reflexion, that his

cousin and I were engaged in some discourse uncommonly interesting. Misinterpreting the sympathy of my manner; misapplying the tears I shed; he first played without seeing a card, and then, in mere absence of mind, spread those in his hand before the company. This raised a great laugh against him, in which Madame St. Hermine was so far from joining, that she made quite a serious quarrel of it. Nor was her anger lessened, on finding that he took no pains to appease her.

I cannot but own that I looked disconcerted on hearing that Vaudray had thrown himself into his carriage the moment he quitted the saloon, and was gone to Paris. Every one was bursting with curiosity to know why he left us; nor did my obvious astonishment lessen it. The Count continues to take a malicious pleasure in condoling with me on his cousin's unpoliteness. Not a possible thing but the truth has escaped the surmises of the company. The ironical manner of Mon-

sieur De Sommerive is, however, sometimes half-rude, and very perplexing: I could not have thought his temper so singular. His regard previous to this, though distinguishing, was not oppressive. He now every moment laments the loss of Vaudray, and always turns to me as if I was most affected by that loss; nor does my obvious indifference on the occasion rectify his judgement.

This kind of attack, however, is a breach of general politeness which entitles me to avoid him and all those English conversations of which he was so fond.

I have gained proportionably on Madame St. Hermine, by adhering to her side; and rather than not have the Count's company, she endures mine.

I am much disconcerted that this unpolite man will mark me out thus: he was a great favourite with me. He certainly resembles Lord Westbury, especially when he speaks; and that likeness, whether real or fancied, obtained him my attention. If the similitude extends no farther, it is

because in the Count that refined politeness which we admire seems habit, and the mere mode of life : in Lord Westbury it is impulse, ardour—an unstudied, touching grace. Ah ! perhaps the whole difference is caused by the tenderness I feel for the latter.

Yours, &c.

LETTER LXVIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

LORDS or commoners, I begin to think that all men are alike : all crouch to those whom they dare not insult ; and insult those to whom they are not obliged to crouch. A little tolerable complaisance had prevailed among us during the few days we passed in the country, after I wrote to you. The Count de Sommerive seemed convinced that his gallantries would be ineffectual, and Madame St.

Hermine that I had no wish to engross them. Lady Killarney, devoted to the Marquis Louvigny, paid little attention to any of us.

On the morning appointed for our return, as we were stepping into the carriage, I recollected a workbag which I had left in a corner where I thought no one else likely to find it, and ran up stairs; followed, as it appeared, by the Count. He shut the door; which was the first intimation I had of his intrusion. I would have passed him to return.

“One moment! only one moment, my lovely Miss Rivers!” cried he, in English; doubtless that the servants, if any were in hearing, might not understand him.

“Excuse me, Monsieur. I detain the company.”

“Oh! tell me, then, when and where I may see you? I have much to say.”

“Nothing that requires secrecy: you see me every day. I must go. Pray, Monsieur—”

“Whether my conference should be secret or not, rests with yourself. I may in company, if you please, agitate that lovely bosom; draw tears from those sweet eyes:—or do you distinguish thus only my happy cousin? Vaudray, Madam—”

“Is polite, generous, delicate. Would I could say as much of all his relations!”

Would you think it? This elegant, polished Count took both my hands, and smiled in my face with dauntless assurance.

“Sweetest of creatures,” cried he, “I adore you! You know it, and you tyrannise over me. Oh, what would I not be to obtain the praise you lavish on one whom it cannot attach! Vaudray loves another.”

“It is therefore I esteem him. His candour is the test of all his other virtues.”

“Then is it true that you only esteem him?—and is hope yet mine?”

“I do not perceive one to be the ne-

cessary consequence of the other, Monsieur. Of this be assured : your rude detention, your insolent freedom, will oblige me to withdraw every mark of my regard from you ; and if I may indeed depend on your respect, be the first proof of it given this moment."

"Am I not now giving it ? Am I not now seeking to snatch you from the caprices of those as much your inferiors in every other advantage, as beauty and sweetness of temper ?"

"Hold, Monsieur ! for since you will oblige me to understand, I owe it to myself to set you right. Your high rank, personal advantages, and insinuating address, may by some casual successes have taught you to look on morals as a chimera. You will one day better know the human heart : a general observation is enough to convince you that virtue may be found in every degree ; a more particular one, that it is most frequent in the middle rank of life. We are early taught by prudence its outward value, and by the want of all

other pleasures its inward ; till, engrafted on our very existence, it becomes our leading principle. Nor have I any design to mortify your vanity, in saying that I have never once wavered in this conversation."

I rushed by him, and flying down stairs heeded not his entreaties. But, in spite of all my self-command, he had so thoroughly fluttered and confused me, that I protested I had sought in vain for the workbag, which Lady Killarney instantly, and obviously, took out of my hand. A satirical smile from the whole company, at the moment the Count rejoined us, showed that they clearly understood how I came to be so embarrassed.

* * * * *

Once more are we in the convent ; and again has my namesake stepped before me in Lady Killarney's favour. They are together from morning to night, and with the Marquis and his sister form mysterious parties ; to which, thank Heaven, I am not invited.

My hours are chiefly spent with Miss Fermor; and during the time that I must necessarily remain at home (for we remove to-morrow to a ready-furnished hotel) I can easily avoid seeing company.

The Count is again very assiduous in his visits to his sister, but I go not with her. How mortified by this time must be his vanity!

I cannot but perceive that Lady Killarney finds Paris too agreeable to think of quitting it: a prevailing tie binds her here. The Marquis De Louvigny is yet unmarried; and, indeed, if we may trust his own declaration, intends to remain so: but she is too sanguine to renounce a favourite project, and has a very fine fortune to tempt him. I am much mistaken if for love she would not give up even religion.

I have been astonished that a woman with such advantages has not more lovers; but this formidable, fashionable Marquis, I suppose, keeps them all at a distance. Lord Winchester and his family are on

the coldest terms with Lady Killarney ; and I know, though she professes to despise them all, that she is mortified.

Who indeed would not be so, that has seen or heard of Lady Diana Selwyn ? She is lovely to a degree. On her cheek the cold rose of chastity blooms with a freshness which art could never imitate. She is eminently virtuous and amiable : were she not the first, she would be worshipped here. Yet there is something dignified in her manners—a modesty wholly distinct from bashfulness : —*that* is the insipid characteristic of ignorance : modesty marks the pure and polished soul. In correcting the first, some, unhappily, destroy the latter. It is modesty alone that can shed those rays of glory round virtue, which strike on the eyes of each observer. Let this charm for ever remain to my countrywomen ; let their complexions and souls remain equally pure from the arts of France : and long may they retain as great a superiority in virtue as in beauty ! The most decided

pre-eminence in fashion would be dearly bought by the renunciation of one noble sentiment; nor can the reputation of it be acquired without a much greater sacrifice. The women of England cannot help being lovely; and while to that advantage they add virtue, what nation need they either envy or imitate?

Would it not be wise in our legislature to consider, in time, how easy it is to import the manners with the modes of France, and how pernicious those must necessarily become to thousands yet unborn? In every civilized nation women give the general taste; and can men ever be too careful whence that sex get what they give? Yet do not conclude this an illiberal, indiscriminate censure. Many, many ladies in France have minds, manners, and persons, which the most virtuous might copy, the most beautiful admire: but, alas! it is not in the circle of Lady Killarney's society that we must seek for them. Those who are good seem at the head of the sex; for the touching, tender,

and poignant, seldom unite but in a Frenchwoman.

I have borne your silence thus long, my dear, as patiently as I could: but it now becomes quite insupportable, and little agrees with those assurances of undiminished affection which you have so often made me. Oh, consider, my beloved Amelia! tenderly consider, that my heart has no other asylum than yours; and if I have not merit to ensure your unremitting attention, grant it to my helpless and destitute situation. I already am acquainted with all your cares; I know, too, all your pleasures: yet it is that which makes me wish to hear of both, for they alone can interest me. Those of one yet dearer never converged into my sphere: though, perhaps, your silence ought to alarm me for his safety. Oh, think what misery to me may be contained in that poor word *perhaps*!

LETTER LXIX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YOUR long expected letter is at last arrived, my Amelia, and has electrified me. Is it possible that I can have been so stupid as never to give our address? I am tempted to suppose that you must have burnt or lost the letter that contained it.—Mrs. Granville, too, in Ireland! I cannot think how that odd soul, Miss Fermor's uncle, should enter your head; or how Mr. Forrester's college friend should find out his odious Islington villa. However, that conveyance having answered, I think we may as well continue it. Lady Killarney's servants are ungoverned and forgetful: our stay in the hotel precarious. Miss Fermor, on the contrary, is stationary, kind, and faithful. Yes: direct to me under cover to her: there can be no risk in doing that.

I give you joy of your little Amelia : but she will never rival with me my god-daughter and namesake. Tell Mr. Forrester that I will owe him a warmer acknowledgment than I can convey in a letter, for his perseverance in inquiring after me.

I languish, my dear, again to be in England ; and lament, in vain, that yieldingness of temper which induced me to quit it. I cannot conceal from you, that I daily apprehend every thing disgraceful and mortifying on the part of Lady Killarney : she renounces all decorum, all decency. I know not the laws of widowhood ; but naturally concluding that the calamity which induced such a dress would bind her without a rule to a severe propriety, I cannot but be shocked to see all propriety set aside. Late parties at home and abroad, mysterious whispers, notes not less so : an incomprehensible kind of conduct, obliges me to retreat into myself. The Marquis does not, cannot mean Lady Killarney well : he ridi-

eules marriage every day, every hour, in her very presence: he is hardly prevented by that, from giving way to a distinction of me which he contrives to make only less impertinent. These general lovers, I have been told, never love any one but themselves: Lady Killarney, however, will not see any thing that shall wound her self-love. She appears enchanted with his passion—as she terms a strange, vain, non-descript, extravagant attention: and having worn me to death all day about him, he completely exhausts me by continuing the subject all the evening. Mr. Fitzmaurice's picture has retreated from her bosom to her pocket, to make way for that of the Marquis: yet those upon which Hamlet descants can hardly be greater opposites. I have not seen a sweeter countenance than the one she has displaced. It was a kind of consciousness that made her, I suppose, half snatch the interesting miniature from me—blush, sigh, and hastily put it into her pocket, while she carefully adjusted the other.

Perhaps I should hardly have had discernment enough to remark this, had I not been rendered quick-sighted by the Count De Sommerive. Not at this house, though, I can assure you; for here he visits no longer: this gate is shut upon him at the Marquis's desire, though the reason remains yet unacknowledged. I went yesterday to purchase some toys for Madame St. Hermine's infant daughter; and the Count happening first to observe the carriage, and then me, quitted his own in a moment. He called for such a profusion of things, that the people were, as he wished, at once dispersed. I felt my own insignificance, and was going out of the shop; when he stopped me.

"Stay, sweet Miss Rivers; give me but one moment, since I have at length made or found one. Did you know how I have sought it!"

"I should respect you, Monsieur, too much, and myself too little, were I to hear you."

"By that virtue you adorn you shall

hear me: for your own sake only do I now urge this. Haughty, severe, inflexible to me, yet are you the adored of my soul: and I cannot but believe you. Alas! were you to be won or bought, you would not be guarded so strictly; and the care taken of you proves at once your virtue. What you will not sacrifice to me, it is some consolation to save you from yielding to another. Your situation alarms me: they knew that I should be a severe observer, and I am therefore banished."

"Lady Killarney is above a design—a mean, disgraceful design."

"Lady Killarney," cried he with a contemptuous air, "is a weak woman; and it is well if that is her greatest fault. Madame St. Hermine cannot shelter herself under the same excuse: she is, as you know, well born, but she is wholly without fortune. You have seen her sumptuous houses; you know her establishment: imagine how all this is kept up."—His sarcastic look needed no explanation.

“What do you insinuate, Count?” cried I, every feature stiffening in a manner with horror and indignation. “Heavens! can women well born, and highly educated, thus descend?—and has my ill-fortune placed me among such? I feel myself, Monsieur, for ever indebted to you for a candour that cancels your past offence. I ought, perhaps, entirely to forget the insult which I now find I brought upon myself.”

“Be assured, my dear Miss Rivers, that your singular situation—pardon me if I add, your more singular conversation with my cousin, gave me, as I thought, a right to try my fortune. How could I look for the perfections that eminently distinguish you, in one of Madame St. Hermine’s society? All Paris knows that she maintains her splendid hotel less for her own accommodation, than that of a certain set. I am much deceived if this is any secret to Lady Killarney: but you may be assured that I cannot be mistaken.”

“When you meet me in Madame St. Hermine’s hotel, Monsieur, I will pardon your treating me again as one of her set. No: humble though my birth, and yet more humble my fortune, my heart dares to prefer all the evils they bring on me, to the luxurious elegance which these ladies sink so low to riot in.”

Crimson with indignation, and even taller through a just pride, I gave the Count, in token of reconciliation, my hand, and permitted him to lead me to the carriage. He took it with a deference that was not lost upon me.

I could not but on reflexion think that I was indebted to this honourable frankness in Monsieur De Sommerive; and must own, it was some relief to me to reinstate him in my esteem. I again saw in him the man of honour and understanding. Ah, how else should he resemble Lord Westbury?

Had he uttered one word which I could trace to self-interest, I should dis-

credit all he told me ; but he saw the necessity of impressing my mind, and even restrained his usual gallantry.

Hardly had I recovered the shock of his intelligence when I entered Lady Killarney's apartment, where I found the Marquis Louvigny and his sister. I had not a single toy in my hand, having in my confusion forgotten my errand ; and my face, at sight of the two visitors, was petrifying, I doubt not, for they soon took leave. Lady Killarney, in the happiest harmony of spirits, began an eulogium on her friends ; while I sat considering whether I was not in conscience bound to tell her all that I had heard, lest I might be an indirect accessory in her ruin. Surprised at my absence of mind, she questioned me closely on its cause ; which, after some circumlocution, I told her. Heavens, how she blushed and flamed forth ! “ What an interpretation had I given, indeed, to the elegant and refined manners of Madame St. Hermine !—Then the Marquis ; the man in the world most

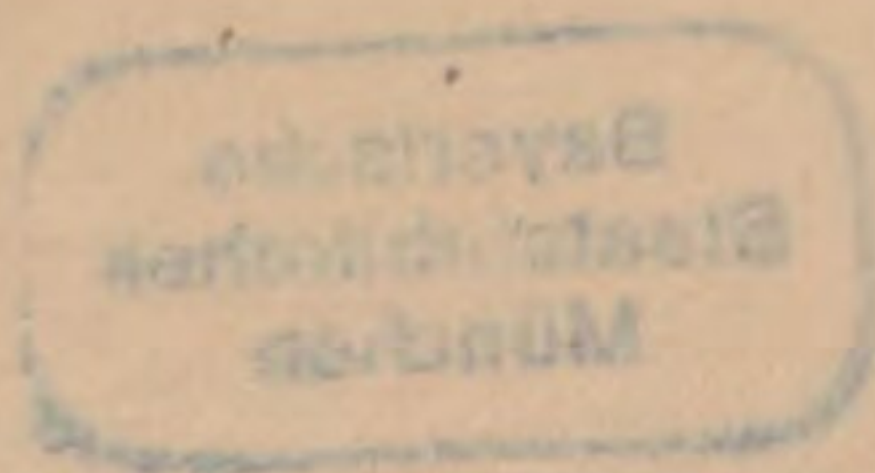
incapable of design! Oh, I was grown censorious beyond all endurance, and people of condition despised the opinion of the vulgar." She found, however, a way to make my colour vie with her own, by turning round on me, and saying, "Who told you all this, Miss Rivers?" Her inquisitive, suspicious eye; the abruptness of the question; the danger of avowing the truth; and the equal danger of concealing it: all these thoughts together, threw me into an embarrassment which common observers might have construed into guilt. I however only said, that I had learnt all I repeated at the convent; and she was silenced.

I have heard Mademoiselle De Sommerive say, that Lady Winchester and her mother are very intimate. The former, I find, means soon to return to England; and if I could get the recommendation of the latter, I might perhaps obtain the protection of the embassadress. This is a favour which I should not hesitate to ask of the Count, could I see him. I fear

that I shall never be able to disengage myself from Lady Killarney but by some such means ; and surely I may hope Lady Winchester will have the goodness to patronise me. I think I may as well hasten to Miss Fermor, and take her advice directly.

* * * * *

Yes, my dear, I have reason to believe that the Count De Sommerive was at once sincere and generous in his communication. Miss Fermor owns that she has heard strange surmises whispered of Madame St. Hermine. Miss Eliza Rivers is certainly interdicted from visiting her. The sweet novice approves my plan, but Mademoiselle De Sommerive is so much hurt at finding her cousin rejected by Miss Fermor, as to shun her. I therefore was obliged to intrude upon that young lady, whose warm and generous nature so disposes her to confer a favour, that she thinks every moment an age till she has obliged you. She dispatched a note requesting her brother's company. That



was easily obtained; but the Count, though he did not refuse to speak to his mother, engaged in this interference very coldly.

I told him that I should impatiently expect the event of his embassy. "Ah, Madam! do you remember how you try me?" cried he: "but you wish to be in England. Yes," he added with a sigh, "you wish to be in England!" Then fixing his eyes on mine, as if he hoped to find something there which might confute his words, I thought him at the moment so like Lord Westbury, that I could not avoid sighing. How touching a gaiety then tintured his manners! I congratulate myself now, that I have not a heart to bestow; since, perhaps, his country, religion, and rank, would not enable me to withhold mine from the Count De Sommerive. No: love is the only preservative against love.

Adieu!

Yours, &c.

LETTER LXX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

PARIS, ever Paris!—There is no getting out of the odious place, I fear, when once you are in it. I am unfortunate enough to want a proper advocate with Madame De Sommerive. Her son is obviously cold in the cause: it is, perhaps, the only instance in which his generosity would want solicitation. But as this may become a pretence for often seeing me, he has made five visits at the convent so precisely when I happened to be there, as to leave me no doubt that he employs some one to give him intelligence of my arrival. He then wastes more time in talking of my affairs than would serve to settle them; and the most comical thing of all is, that I cannot resolve to be angry with him.

I understand from the Count, as well as from other people, that the forbidding Lady Winchester is as proud as she appears to be, and it is very doubtful whether she will ever condescend to countenance a young person whom Lady Killarney brought over; even though she were satisfied of my virtue and merit. Alas! that to mere punctilio the great should thus sacrifice the repose of those so humbled by fortune as to court their protection! Lady Diana Selwyn is in the country, or I might perhaps interest her; and Madame De Sommerive no less proud, for aught I can learn, than Lady Winchester, is determined to be certain of obtaining the favour before she condescends to ask it. Suspense is therefore, you see, my portion, and patience my only support.

In the interim we have new wrangles, I might almost say incessant wrangles, in this house. The impertinent Marquis has not been able to resist the temptation of attacking me; he yesterday gave me a billet on some music-paper, pretending

that it was a new song. I saw Lady Killarney cast a jealous earnest eye on the scroll: and to quiet or end her apprehensions, I at once gave it to her unopened. Heavens! what a tempest ensued! Brissac was summoned with a hundred essence bottles, and all the servants stood staring at me as a criminal. Lady Killarney cried out every moment, that she “could not support life: it was ever her peculiar curse to warm in her bosom the serpent who stung it.” With this singularly obliging compliment she retreated to her room, regardless of the surmises these expressions must occasion. Her party sent to her, nay called, in vain: she was invisible—ill to an alarming degree. The whole of that evening and the next day she spent in writing twenty letters to M. De Louvigny, and receiving as many in return. And how did all this end?—Why, by her being convinced that I was the only culpable person. To attract an insolent high-born libertine against my will was, no doubt, a crime

that could never be forgiven! I now, therefore, have free leave to retire whenever either the brother or sister is here; and as I have for some time avoided accompanying her Ladyship abroad, I have now only Miss Fermor to engage my time. However, to be out of such society (after the intelligence of the Count) is a great consolation.

I am not without my fears that the censorious set may learn something of those punctual visits which the Count makes at the convent during mine. It is true that the place, and his sister's presence, ought to secure one from slander. However, my rattle-brained namesake (the most probable spy) is luckily rarely there, being now again continually with Lady Killarney. I guess by this, that Miss Eliza Rivers has given up all hopes of the Marquis, and is willing to look out for a lover whom she will not be so liable to have wrested from her.

Could I once bring the Count De Sommerive to wish to serve me, I cannot

but think that he has the power: his own recommendation to Lady Diana would certainly be enough. That sweet creature is so universally commended, that I cannot but be prepossessed in her favour. She is the darling of both her parents, who know not what it is to deny her: yet her rational and benevolent requests only tend to make those whom she can assist, and herself, happy. Ah, what a contrast to that mutable, unhappy woman of quality with whom I am now connected! The eternal fretfulness of her temper, although every human good is at her command, proves indeed most plainly, that virtue and peace are inseparable.

Adieu!

LETTER LXXI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

CERTAINLY this is a most extraordinary family! and my life here odd beyond conception. Adventures, too, multiply: and in the midst of them all I cannot but smile at thinking what a contest the poor Marquis Louvigny has had between his insolent vanity, and the foolish inclination which he could not, or would not, conquer for the little insignificant now addressing you. What, to lose one moment of those so important in the world of gallantry on an insensible? This, if known, would greatly diminish his glory in the annals of intrigue: though, *entre nous*, I can perceive that your fashion-mongers are all at intervals tired of their own celebrity; and were it not that they become for a part of their time invisible,

they could never support the toil of keeping up the *ton*. It is to husband well this invisibility that they, I suppose, generally look out for an insignificant like myself, for whom they have little retreats a league from Paris.

I, as usual, was left at home the other day by Lady Killarney, and meant to spend it with Miss Fermor: the footman who attends me was not just then in the way, and I was waiting his return, when I saw a fiacre drive into the court, from whence alighted a milliner laden with band-boxes. The servants conducted her into the room where I was: a piece of ill-breeding which Lady Killarney has of late licensed. I was going out of it, when the woman gave me a billet. Supposing it to be some odd commission from the odd mortal who now governs me, I opened it, and saw the signature of De Louvigny. It informed me that the Marquis had planned a party, only to relieve me and himself from the jealous eyes of Lady Killarney; that he adored me more than

any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath; and flattered himself, that I would allow him to plead his own cause at a little elegant villa fitted up for my approbation, and where my pleasure might close the door for ever on Lady Killarney and my whole sex.

I can be mortified only by those whom I love. This curious epistle, therefore, excited merely my contempt: I threw it, open as it was, to the woman, and bade her tell the Marquis that I equally despised the invitation and the inviter; who, I hoped, would in future believe that there might be found one virtuous woman, even after she had seen him. As a hint for her own particular use, I added, that if this did not prove the last embassy of the kind which she ever engaged in, where I was concerned, she must expect to be conducted to the gate by half a dozen ill-bred English footmen, who would know how to revenge though they did not how to respect me. I finished with an ironical disdain: when, lo! a person hid in a ca-

lash, who had held the band-boxes, stepped forward, and by his voice I knew the Marquis, disguised as he was. He rallied me, with an intrepidity worthy of himself, on my ironical answer; now complimented, now complained; laughed, cried, knelt, and persecuted me with such rapidity that I vainly sought to interrupt him. I never was more awkwardly situated: it was not possible to make him either serious or silent.

In vain I looked around for friend or protector. The insolent servants of Lady Killarney would, I had reason to fear, either second his representation of the affair, or by a malicious one of their own equally injure me. The milliner had vanished; and finding it impossible to gain a hearing, I would have escaped too: but with a grasp like that of a giant he detained me, till I would make some appointment. The disdain that flushed into my cheeks, and fired my heart, enabled me to raise my voice. But not choosing to enter the lists with a female tongue, though really

his own might vie with that of any woman, the insolent wretch said, that "lips like mine were formed for the language of love: gray hairs and wisdom might do very well together." He then attempted to kiss me; and I turned eagerly round, as well to avoid him as to ring the bell, which I was very near. Hardly, however, was I more petrified than the Marquis, when both beheld Lady Killarney emerge from the cavity between the double doors of the 'drawing-room. Her complexion absolutely purple, and every feature distorted with passion: not able, as it appeared, to utter one syllable, she threw herself into a chair. The Marquis was taking, what I find we very justly term, a French leave, when she perceived and stopped him, with transports of rage and tearful reproaches for his treachery and ingratitude. Oh, my dear! I blush even though alone, while I own to you, that this infatuated woman forgot at once her respect for herself, me, and indeed her whole sex; for I could not but understand

that she had left her insolent lover nothing more to hope. I thought I must have sunk into the earth, so debased was I in my own eyes by the knowledge of this disgraceful secret: I seemed as it were a partaker in the inexcusable frailty. But for the Lady herself my contempt could scarcely be concealed; since, as I observed to you in a former letter, she could not plead in excuse, that he had deceived her. I had, alas! staid too long; but I now attempted to withdraw in silence: however, that she would not allow me to do. I knew her injustice so well, that I immediately concluded her rage was going to change its object: when, to my great surprise, she fell on my neck and shed a flood of tears, declaring that she had no fault to impute to me: but for that monster, she commanded him to begone. Tears, lamentations, and bursts of passion, again half strangled her. He interfered: again she haughtily bade him begone, and never more shock her with his presence. The Marquis, now

angry in his turn, arose, and making her a low bow, forgetful of his woman's apparel, looked so inconceivably droll, that I hardly could refrain from laughing; while he took leave of us both in these words:

“The least respect I could in gratitude pay you, Lady Killarney, is that of listening to complaints for which I never gave occasion; and the greatest, is to show an implicit regard to your last command. As, however, we have loved, I will in turn give you a hint. Learn to part with a good grace; take all the credit of our quarrel to yourself, and be consoled as soon as possible. Let me, too, for the future, my dear Lady Killarney, recommend to you a little less indulgence to your lovers; and to the frost piece by your side a little more, if you wish to keep a conquest, or she hopes to make one. And now, ladies, I have the honour to wish you both that happiness which I shall never more expect from either.”

* * * * *

What thinks my Amelia of our French

lover? Yet these vain, self-sufficient wretches, who seduce but to expose and insult their victims, acquire celebrity by such conduct, and a power of choosing whom they shall next destroy. I cannot but own, that I was thoroughly rejoiced to find I was fairly rid of the insolent man: but, alas! Lady Killarney thought not with me. Her hysteric fits gave way at times to new bursts of passion, rage, and despair: she was carried to bed, declaring herself in a raging fever; and having called in one physician who did not agree with her in opinion, she sent for another more complaisant. The whole college would vainly have tried to persuade her that she had more than a few hours to live. A notary was summoned in haste, that she might make her will, and show her gratitude to me for the tender care I had taken of her. Three days have now elapsed, and, maugre all her resolutions to die, she finds she must survive; and has no complaint but ill-humour. What a spoiled child must she have been in her infancy,

thus to become the tyrant of herself: for such a temper is a far greater torment to its possessor than to any other person. If I may look into her heart, even at this moment, her pride suffers far more than that; and yet I feel for her. Alas! no wonder that our tears affect the men, when hers touch a woman; and one born to shed so many for herself.

I have, however, in a very surprising manner, recovered my influence with her. Although veils, cells, beads, and confessions, occupy a share in her rêveries, I think she is much improved by this mortification. Grief is, I fancy, of infinite use to people of distinction, by correcting their self-love, and levelling them awhile, even in their own opinion, with the rest of their species.

During the time this violent woman kept her bed, I was never allowed to leave the side of it; but now she is carried into her dressing-room, (and she really undergoes this ceremony with the languor of a sick wretch reduced to the last extremity)

where she admits a few of her friends, to amuse her poor spirits during her recovery. Madame St. Hermine has just been here; and, having implored to see the fair sufferer, has been admitted. A most passionate interview had we. Our French friend, however, reprobates the conduct of her brother, whom she bewails as having been ruined by the boundless partiality of the women. I saw at once that she was determined to establish herself for the day, and would not fail to use every means which address and adulation could suggest to reconcile Lady Killarney to the world, and, above all, to her house and self. I could not submit to become a party in this farce, and therefore hastened to the convent, to learn from Mademoiselle De Sommerive whether the Count had really exerted himself with his mother in my behalf; but I found that young lady in a flood of tears, her brother having written to tell her that both himself and Vaudray had a peremptory order to join their regiment in Flanders. I saw that

she was too much occupied with her own affairs to think of mine, and therefore could only entreat Miss Fermor to see the Count whenever he came to take leave of his sister, and endeavour to learn whether he thought that I might hope for Lady Winchester's protection or not. I got into the carriage, and was hardly out of the court of the convent before I perceived the Count driving thither. He, too, observed me; and, alighting hastily, ran to the side of the coach, entreating to speak to me. I knew not what to do, and was inclined to return to the convent; but the servant had already opened the door, and stepping in he bade them drive wherever I had ordered them. The last interview I had had with him ought, perhaps, to have saved me from all apprehension; but dependent young women are vulnerable so many ways that they are hardly ever at ease. The fatigue and mortification which the hasty order from court had caused the Count were very visible in his countenance. He sunk into a long rêverie;

and while his eyes eagerly and wildly surveyed me over and over, he seemed hardly to recollect who was the object of his attention. I was even obliged to remind him, that I had allowed him to come into the carriage only from finding that he particularly wished to speak to me.

“Speak to you, Madam!” cried he with a tender vivacity: “Ah! can I see you, and remember that there is for me a greater pleasure on earth? It is only when you speak that I am sensible of it.”

“I will trouble you with but one question, Monsieur: may I hope for the honour of Madame De Sommerive’s intercession with the embassadress?”

“You shall never need it, lovely Miss Rivers.—I am a weak advocate when I plead against myself. Perhaps I shall be alike so when I plead for myself; yet must I dare the trial. I am called from Paris, you already know; nor have I more than a moment to ascertain my own fate, or extenuate the offence which I committed against decorum in your person.—Have

the generosity at once to pardon me, and think that, whatever has been my sin, the leaving you thus is a sufficient punishment."

"Offence, do you say, Monsieur? The noble frankness of your late communication at once excused that, and rendered me eternally your debtor. Nor can I allow you to leave me with a doubt of my esteem, gratitude, and regard. I shall soon be in England; and that I can quit your country without disgrace is, perhaps, solely owing to you."

"Ah, Madam, neither I nor my country can resign you thus. I hardly know how I shall reconcile you to a frankness on my part which your own ingenuous nature inspires.—I will not attempt to deceive her whom I languish to obtain. Alas! in marrying, I cannot hope to offer the dear creature who can give distinction to my life, that rank which I ought to give my bride. The only male descendant of several noble families, each severally would have power to annul a marriage in which all did not concur. In

deigning to accept the hand which now trembling grasps yours, Miss Rivers, I ingenuously own that you could only hope to satisfy God and your own conscience; but there is a grandeur in your mind which sometimes persuades me that those are all you wish to satisfy. In England I will regularly marry you; but in France I may never be able to own you as my wife. To my heart I must refer you for the compensation. Ah, how will that delight to supply to you the admiration of a capricious multitude! If, then, I have not flattered myself in thinking that you have sometimes regarded my profound assiduity with pleasure, till doubt induced you to discountenance my attachment, you will allow me, should I survive the campaign, to wait on you in England."

"There is something, Monsieur, so affecting, noble, and flattering in your candour, that I can only reward by returning it; and thus, perhaps, I seek an excuse to my own heart for telling you that another is in possession of it. I lament that

the strong resemblance which I could not but perceive in you to the man in whom my fate is bound up, should engage more of my attention than we usually bestow on a stranger. It was impossible to know you better without a partial respect for your merit. I will frankly add, that had I been at liberty to make a choice, the proposal which you have deigned thus to hint could have been declined only for your own sake. I think I owe you this acknowledgement, as a proof that I am as sensible of esteem as of a tenderer passion."

"How much I am affected by your generous explanation, my eyes, you see, Madam, will witness." Turning from me to hide the strong emotion, he repeated to himself—"How strange, how singular my destiny, to resemble in person him whom I was born to envy!"

"The resemblance extends much further, Count; you resemble him in mind, in manners, in rank—nay, even in the very partiality which you now avow."

"I could, then, have touched your heart? Alas! that such a thought should

ever become an affliction! Yet am I pleased that with my idea any favourite reflexion should recur to your mind! Ah, Madam, when the features of this happy lover shall, hereafter, bring mine before you, may you ever find the similitude as great in what you alone could term partiality! But you will, surely, make the confidence complete, and allow me to know the name?"

" Pardon me: I give not my heart by halves. The deserving possessor of it might justly impeach the delicacy of my conduct, did I impart, even to you, a situation too undecided for discussion. Our modes of thinking often differ from those of France. Love and friendship can never be too much separated in the heart of an English woman, when one of the other sex is the object of the latter. Nor can I reconcile it to myself to withdraw the smallest portion of either, from him who has so well merited both. The knowledge of his name would be unimportant to you: but of this be assured, that should I be fortunate enough ever to bear it, I will not fail to address you; and

shall, with pride and pleasure, present to the chosen of my heart a mind and person so like his own; and then will I claim the friendship which I dare not now appropriate."

"Remember, I look on that promise as inviolable," cried he, fixing his fine eyes on mine, and pressing my hands as though he were parting with them for ever. "No, most lovely of women, I never could endure altogether to lose you! Yet you have found the way to reconcile me to a painful duty; and I shall, to-morrow, readily obey that summons which yesterday appeared irksome and unnecessary."

The tender tone in which he spoke drew tears into my eyes. One fell upon the hand which grasped mine. He raised it with reverence to his lips, and smilingly said—"This is to me holy water!"

"You must leave me now, Count," said I, stopping the carriage. "Adieu!" I offered him a hand—"I shall always wish to hear of, though I must not see

you, and that your reputation will assure to me. While I can grant my prayers with justice to my country, they will follow Monsieur De Sommerive ! ”

“ Think not, Madam, that I will ever lose the consolation of concluding that those prayers are in my favour. This sword shall never be drawn upon an English heart, lest the malice of my fate should select that only one through which yours could be wounded.”

He sprang from the coach, and left me in such a confusion of spirits that I never missed my bracelet, which was that girlish keepsake of yours, with the initials of our names interwoven. Surely he must have taken it off, or I could not have lost it. Doubtless he imagined the hair my own. Pardon me if I do not reclaim it. I cannot resolve to write to any man but Lord Westbury, nor could I without a confidence in some domestic which would be wholly improper.

Perhaps, too, my heart relents a little to my high-spirited generous lover.

The stolen treasure he will consider as a relique; and indeed it may, for aught I know, be as genuine as any which our Lady of Loretto can boast. I could not trifle thus if I thought the feelings of the Count would be as lasting as they now are poignant; but the happy temperament of the French, preserves them from gloomily and silently brooding over the sorrows which they as passionately complain of as the natives of our heavier atmosphere. Monsieur De Sommerive will perhaps always recollect me with pleasure, but he will soon lose the sense of pain. Men, indeed, in general are not capable of the invariable constancy which marks the attachment of a virtuous woman.—O that Lord Westbury may convict me of error in this instance! Why cannot I trust to his possession of the only merit which I have not proved in him? Ah, if ever that moment should arrive when I can present him to the Count, how exquisite would be the pleasure!

LETTER LXXII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

GRACIOUS Heaven! what do I learn from yours of this morning, my dear?—that not one letter of mine has reached you since I left the convent.—I chose an English servant, whom I thought more trusty than the rest, always to carry them to the post. Some mischievous dæmon must have delighted to interrupt our correspondence, or rather, I might say, some mischievous female. Lady Killarney, I doubt not, at the desire of Louvigny, ordered my letters to be intercepted, and their contents have probably supplied amusement to her abandoned circle. I am glad, if so, that I never spared her or her party. Vexed I must undoubtedly be; but, as I cannot recollect naming Lord Westbury, I am the less uneasy. I

shall, through Miss Fermor, send this to the post, and learn, if I can, whether any have been put in in the same hand-writing.

Suspense is now at an end. Lady Winchester, whose pride I find was not exaggerated, has declined receiving into her suite a person who has lived under Lady Killarney's protection. She may be right in this rigid punctilio; but that does not render my fate the less hard. My friends at the convent absurdly postponed telling me this necessary truth, till it could no longer be concealed. I must settle some way of coming home without delay; for though I had Lady Killarney's promise to send a carriage and servants with me, I have no reliance on it. She is too strange. Would you think it—she has enveloped herself once more in her old set of intimates, and I am again forgotten.

Miss Fermor, whose attachment every day increases, solicits me to stay till she takes the veil: but it will be some months before that happens: or else I reluctantly

deny her any indulgence, to whom Heaven allows so few. She, however, is daily more satisfied with her choice.

You will not wonder that I am eager to quit forever a spot where the shadow of reproach has been annexed to the name of

CECILIA RIVERS.

P.S. The Count and his cousin left Paris this morning. The Marquis remains : he is more master of his time.

LETTER LXXIII.

TO MISS ELIZA RIVERS.

YES, I agree to all the provisos you make; for I love you well enough to wish you whatever you wish yourself; and just now the spirit of dear mischief entirely possesses me. Last night, late as it was when we parted, I made a discovery concerning your namesake ! I thought

that she must infallibly be a hypocrite; for such reserve and such frankness surely never met in one woman. Ah, no! our sex rarely know how to keep any secrets but their own; and what freemason can in that instance exceed them? It is to love, and to the man whom any one might love, that this strange, sentimental, interesting creature owes all the grace of mien which I think her only charm.—From whom of my lovers has she learned this, do you think? It is impossible you should guess at a discovery which has amazed me.

I returned home in the same gay humour in which I left you; and, knowing Cecilia was not apt to retire early, ran into the ante-room that separates our apartments, where she usually sups. The fire was, however, decaying; her book turned down on the table, and her chamber-door locked. I was quietly retreating to my own, when a narrow black riband caught in my watch chain; and from under the last volume of *Clarissa* (which had been

the mournful midnight study of Made-moiselle) I drew a miniature picture, which I curiously examined. But I rubbed my eyes, and examined it again—ay, and again; nor even then could persuade myself that it was the picture of Lord Westbury:—nay, that very individual one for which he had sat at my instance, and which I sent him back when we quarrelled. However, I was soon convinced that it was no other: of course that she could have it only from himself. I was not able to rest for puzzling how she and he could get on such terms, since it is plain that she is not to be bought. I carried off the prize, however, and resolved to judge how she valued it, by watching her in the morning. Earlier than usual she came into my room, and, casting an anxious, inquisitive eye around, said not a syllable. Had she asked for her treasure with either the freedom of innocence, or the consciousness of guilt, that would have been natural and intelligible. At length, with a constrained smile, she inquired if I was

not in the ante-room late last night. I acknowledged it. "Your Ladyship took thence that picture," glancing her timid eye on it, for I scorned to put it out of sight. "I certainly found a picture there."—"I am glad it is so safe," added she with a tremulous confusion. "I had just received it from a friend in England, who thought that I might have it set here at much less expense than in London, and I was afraid I had been unlucky enough to lose it."—"You dress your story very well, my dear, but you can never hope that I shall credit you. It had been taken from your bosom. Do you honour an unknown gentleman with a place so near your heart? However, as the picture is nothing to you, I will get it copied, for it is the best likeness I have seen of a man whom I once loved."—"Your Ladyship seems strangely disposed to raillery this morning; nor do I understand how I am to interpret your speech. If you are serious, you must know the delicacy of a trust too well to expect that I should violate it."—

“That this picture might be confided to you in trust I easily believe; but what, Miss Rivers, did you confide in return? Lord Westbury, to my knowledge, sets too high a value on himself to be satisfied with a trifling pledge.”

See the torments of dissimulation, and what this fool calls virtue. She felt the transitions of an ague with apprehension, while her complexion took every hue before it recovered its own. At last, however, she recollected herself; and true still to the affected decorum of her character — “Give me leave,” said she coldly enough, “to inform your Ladyship that raillery is the most contemptible branch of a contemptible quality. The wit which only enables us to dispense with good nature and good breeding, a rational mind would not wish to possess. If this is Lord Westbury’s picture, she who owns may possess it without shame—you cannot detain it without injustice.” — “That it is the picture of the peer in question,” returned I, “may be proved by one

word—I mean, that it was my own, as long as I would condescend to keep it, and drawn under my direction.” What this eclaireissement unfolded to Miss Cecilia I cannot guess; but, even while her confusion increased, her saucy eyes glanced over me with a penetrating haughtiness which I can neither forget nor forgive; and she seemed to retreat into herself for a subject of admiration.

Some moments elapsed in this extraordinary silence; when rising, with a cold superiority of air which words cannot describe—“It is not for me to inquire how your Ladyship *ever* (and on that word she laid a marked emphasis) became interested in this little portrait: it is sufficient that I received it from another person, consequently have a right which no way refers to the prior one you speak of.”—Away she went, in all her dignity, to wail in secret a loss which she shall not easily make good; though I recollect now that she added—“You owe it to your

own honour, safely to restore what accident alone put into your hands."

Had the conceited prude been honest enough to have said—"It is the picture of the man whom I love, and I obtained it at too high a price to part with it easily," I should have laughed, and given it back in a moment. Yet I am bursting with curiosity to know how this happened. With her, then, he consoled himself, after driving me into marrying the man I detested. I could murder him for giving her this picture, and her for having it!

I always thought what her parade of virtue would come to:—a mighty merit, truly, to resist the man she did not love, when secure of him whom she did!—though, *entre nous*, that is, on a fair calculation, all the merit any of her sex can boast. How can one but laugh to hear fools make histories of the inviolable chastity of their nymphs!

O that I could buy her secret and Lord Westbury's! I have ordered Bris-

sac to provide keys, that we may examine her writing-desk.—Is there no getting it out of that English novice whom she is so fond of?—Girls never sigh and weep together without oppressed hearts.—Try to decypher the mystery, if you love me, that I may devise some way to part and fret them both. I would send her to Ireland, and marry her to a footman, were a more refined plot to fail.

These inexplicable mysteries torment and worry me to death; and there are, unluckily, a few people in the world whom money cannot manage. Were it otherwise, mine should fly; for I scorn to be a miser in any thing, and now, thanks to what I have learned in this country, dare do whatever I wish.

Happy, happy France! here appearances supply the place of realities! Here we come, to forget all the lessons of mamma and the vicar! Here we may always despise the censure against which we can shut the door! Here we may love without limitation, and forget without dis-

grace; indulging every sense under the veil of refinement, and that way preserving a respect for each other which the vulgar deny us!

I mean to spend almost the whole of my days where first my mind was enfranchised from prejudice.

In England we are taught to dread love as the destruction of all happiness, yet to consider constancy as a merit. How exquisitely is this system reversed in France! where marriage becomes as much a convenience to the female sex, as with us it is to the male. Ah, how could I take so complete a surfeit of that honourable state as not to be able to endure the word, even when it is mentioned by the softest butterfly-beau who buzzes round my toilet!

Adieu, dear Eliza!—Beg, buy, steal the secret; for I shall never rest till I know it.—We meet, as usual, in the evening.

LETTER LXXIV.

TO LADY KILLARNEY.

AH! what will you say when I tell you that this curious secret, without begging, buying, or stealing, has obligingly disclosed itself? The very extraordinary epistle I send you, was brought (through the indiscriminate address) to me: nor did I guess that I had not a right to it, till I had perused the contents. It was then very obvious that your Miss Rivers was the person for whom it was meant; though I was fixed that it should reach your hands, ere her fair ones opened it. I therefore sent word that Miss Rivers was ill, and the messenger must return again in an hour for an answer. He is gone; and now we will call the dæmons from the "vasty deep," before the haughty, prudish Cecilia shall carry such a point in life as this. I expect you with impa-

tience. Two heads are better than one at a plot ; and mine, they tell me, equal to most of my sex. Adieu !

ELIZA RIVERS.

TO MISS RIVERS.

(Enclosed in the preceding one.)

“ THERE are moments, my Cecilia, when a lover should be his own messenger ; and did I not dread agitating your spirits, or wounding your delicacy, I would not trust to another the communication which I thus commit to paper. O my love, my life ! is the hour at last come when I can superadd to titles so dear the one which I bear ? You probably already know that I have at length obtained the right of falling at your feet, and offering all of myself not wholly your own, in my hand. Oh, repeat to me, loveliest, most beloved of women, that it is still dear to you ! Overwhelm me with your soft participation in my soul's fond wishes !

Yes, I shall at last, perhaps, be allowed to read all my raptures reflected in those charming eyes!

Oh! tell me that you are above sacrificing happiness to form, and allow that I have mourned enough in our long separation! I am no longer the imploring, humble lover. I now shall venture to assert the authority which you once gave me over your heart, to quell those refined scruples which, by mere habit, I thus anticipate.

“Mrs. Forrester has advised with me, and I think that even you will approve our plan, which I dared not venture to communicate. Allow me in person to present to you her letter.

“I have been in Paris only while I wrote this, and impatiently await your answer.

“Mrs. Forrester waved informing me what lady you are with: am I known to her? May I come to you at the convent?—or will you fix on a place where

we shall both be less liable to observation?

“ By your eagerness to reply I shall form a judgement of your tenderness; and remember that a common welcome will no longer content your

“ Devoted

“ WESTBURY.”

LETTER LXXV.

TO MISS ELIZA RIVERS.

WHY, this is beyond the utmost hope of an angry woman!—Lady Westbury dead! Ah, had she died two years since, how many pangs had I been spared!—But that he should mean to marry this nameless, heartless, cold, insipid creature! Oh, how I hate the meanness of his spirit!—And this immaculate Cecilia, too, where got she courage to lift her insolent, pre-

suming eyes to him?—to him so distinguished both by nature and fortune!—to rival me a second time—and honourably too!

I thought till this moment that I absolutely hated the tyrant who once so tormented me; but all at once, insulted tenderness, impaired honour, a spark of pride, and a boundless resentment, bid me recall him to the ties which once bound our hearts; and I shall add to the pleasure of keeping her in her own, low, dependent sphere, that of establishing myself in those rights which his lady's death leaves him master of.

I write this in bed, where your note found me. If his messenger comes before I do, have the enclosed ready copied, in your own hand: mine he, alas! knows too well! Be strictly guarded that the sound of my name never reaches his ear. On that the event will depend. Ah! here comes his love, his life! The odious creature, methinks, looks more insupportably censorious and dignified than usual!—

Yes, Lord Westbury's "dear Cecilia! his loveliest of women!" I shall certainly find a way to abate something of your loveliness, and spoil the impertinent tranquillity of your features before we part.

Have I not well imitated her fine, languid, water-gruel style? Mrs. Forrester's ingenious plan we shall want to proceed by: of course her letter must be got ere another step can be taken.

TO LORD WESTBURY.

(Referred to in the above.)

"I CAN guess your surprise and concern, my dear Lord, at finding that I am obliged to employ the hand of a friend to answer your tender epistle; but, alas! I am not yet able to tell you in my own how sensible I am of your generous impatience. Do not, however, alarm yourself: though I am still confined to my bed, all danger is now over. I hope I shall soon be able to see you.

“ The friend who writes this is informed of our engagement ; nor have I a secret with her. To my Eliza you may safely disclose any thing you wish me to know. I shall thus be spared the fatigue of writing, and will communicate my sentiments the same way.

“ Not being at present with any lady, I can have no objection to your visiting here. If you ask for me, I shall send my Eliza, (the young lady I mentioned,) to whose kindness we must be indebted till I dare venture into the parlour.

“ Adieu, my dear Lord ! how grieved I am thus to disappoint you ! Send or bring my beloved Mrs. Forrester's letter as soon as possible to

“ Your

“ CECILIA.”

LETTER LXXVI.

TO MISS RIVERS.

(By favour of Lord Westbury.)

JOY to my darling friend, my own Cecilia!—A joy great as her merit, and lasting as her patience! May I thus have the transport of first saluting her as the Countess of Westbury! Ah, no, my salutation must give place (as it indeed ought) to the ardent one of him who is at length permitted to complete his own wishes in those of his adored Cecilia. The day which crowned mine hardly gave me more delight than that I now look forward to.

An overflow of spirits, which I dare not account for, confuses my words, perplexes my actions, distracts my looks, and almost brings on me the charge of idiotism. My dear Charles, in the generous sensibility of his soul, half reproves me, as insulting the lovely dust hardly yet cold

in the grave. Alas! my dear, how suddenly has the beautiful Henrietta been called to that awful account for which she was little prepared! As she cannot, with propriety, become a theme between you and her Lord, I will tell you all I know of the late melancholy event.

Lord Westbury was with us (I mean to say at Arlington) when, from overheating herself at a crowded assembly, his lady was taken ill. Not apprehending any danger, she took little care of herself. It appeared that she was breeding the measles, which, checked by cold, became at once mortal. What must have been her agony when that sentence was pronounced! All her follies rose magnified to her view, and a phrensy succeeded, which left her but with life.

An express was dispatched to fetch my Lord, for whom she continually called; but before he could arrive she expired. The news met him on the road, and he hastened back again to Arlington, whither he ordered the body to be brought.

She was laid in state at that seat ; and Mr. Forrester, at my Lord's desire, drew up a discourse which was calculated to impress her early death upon the multitude here ; to whom it seemed only yesterday since she fluttered away to that gay world where her heart has been misled, and her days were shortened. It was a most touching scene—not a creature of the many crowding to weep over her coffin, who did not remember her the grace and glory of the village, and the pride of the good Dr. Leslie's heart. I waited upon the young ladies a few days afterwards. Dear little girls, so soon to put on sables ! A mother's tears flowed fast at this recollection. The sweet children wept, too, but it was only because they were told to be sorry ; for they lived so little with their mother that they could not feel their loss. Henrietta's bright eyes soon sparkled through tears. Louisa has a sweet serious air naturally.

Lord Westbury was walking in the garden, and seeing me at the window in-

vited me to join him. Neither of us knew how to begin a discourse so interesting to both. Embarrassment visibly sat on his fine features: at length he mentioned with a becoming regard the lovely creature (for, as he observed, he hardly knew how to call her his wife) whom he had lost. He frankly declared that, for her own sake alone, could he regret her death, nor did he think that any reflexion on his sensibility, since for herself alone had she long lived. The subject, I may say, changed we knew not how, and happier thoughts took place in both. Ah, how delightful is it to turn your eyes to the object of your heart, with a consciousness of deserving it! Not doubting your generous attachment, he implored my mediation to overrule those scruples which he fears you may urge, and thus retard the felicity for which both have so long waited; sure, he says, of success if I will plead his cause. —Was he not sure enough, Cecilia, without my aid? I know not what effect his eloquence may have on you, but he has

clearly convinced me that mortifying the living is an idle compliment to the dead : nor is the situation of a man at all similar to that of a woman when widowed.

In short, I have ventured to suppose that you will not long delay your mutual happiness. Eager to get this letter, that he might fly to deliver it, my Lord left it to me to explain the whole arrangement to Mr. Forrester, when he was gone. My Charles is all surprise, pleasure, and congratulation ; though, by the bye, he has long seen my Lord's partiality, from your becoming so constantly the theme of his conversation and mine. He attends your commands, and will think it the happiest office he can ever execute to unite your hands. It remains with you to tell me where we may all meet. My Charles will prepare the ceremonies, and I the gratulations. He even meditates leaving me behind him. My Lord thought it probable that you would rather choose to travel, for a few months, through the south of France and Switzerland. It is

his intention to drop his title till you assume it; and we three shall make, methinks, the sweetest little party that ever wandered over those beautiful solitary scenes.—For heaven's sake, make not the smallest objection to a plan on which I have set my heart! Is there not something sweetly romantic in our quiet ramble? My husband is, I assure you, half jealous at finding me so ready to elope the very first moment that a handsome fellow invites me. In pity to my impatience relax your forms, my dear Cecilia!—Who but yourself could make me thus eager to run away from my own dear, little, happy home?

Scold, fret, lay all the blame on me,—but comply. There are occasions when authority and compulsion become mighty useful, and I wish I was but your aunt, that I might overrule you. I would, you see, all the while save your delicacy; but, between ourselves, my dear, I think you ought to be glad that I take the care of it off your hands.

Now if, instead of falling in with this pretty, engaging, and I think irresistible plan, you should really be displeased, and tell me that you disobey me, dread the effects of my wrath, since you will expose me to that of Lord Westbury, who is clearly convinced that I can persuade you if I will.

“Peace to all this rhodomontade,” says my anxious Cecilia; and so say I, too: but joy, you know, always made a fool of me; and as most liquors ferment before they come to perfection, my soul must e’en bubble off its froth and dross, ere I can utter one rational idea.

It is now, my dearest, that I shall see you in your own sphere; for nature sometimes makes distinctions, and, giving a clumsy milk-maid a ducal coronet, will bid her who is fit for a duchess lead the dance at a country wake. It is now that your benevolent soul may fully enjoy its favourite pleasure—that of making those around you happy. The generous man who first asks this blessing of you, will

delight to second all your liberal heart shall dictate.

“ Shine forth, rich soul ! to grandeur be
What that can never prove to thee,—
An ornament.”

I know not whether I did right in concealing from my Lord the title of the lady with whom you went abroad. I fancied, from all I had understood of her conduct, that you would wish her unnamed ; and therefore simply directed him to the convent.

I am impatient beyond expression for your determination ; and pack and unpack all my little wardrobe twenty times a-day, merely to avoid idleness.

I am delighted to think that fortune should thus have contrived to make these sweet children more than amends for the mother whom she has taken from them.

Shall I bring you any bridal habiliments ? since to buy and prepare such might excite a suspicion which your decorum will lead you to avoid.

Employ me, my sweet Cecilia, I entreat ; for I positively must busy myself, if I only set about copying my good man's ample set of sermons. He joins in ardent wishes for your happiness, and that of Lord Westbury, with

Your own

A. FORRESTER.

LETTER LXXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris,

IT is a great relief to my spirits to have, by means of the servant at the convent, recovered a number of my letters from the post-office. When we came to the hotel, I sent them by that English footman whom I thought the most civil ; but either from ignorance or selfishness he omitted attending to the customs here : of course my packets were not forwarded.

One would think it almost impossible that so many trifles should concur to harass an individual, as have fallen to my lot since into this great metropolis I came.

I can only now bring all the packets for your perusal. A justifiable disgust, and disgraceful discovery, render me very impatient to quit this odious house, and the wretched woman for whom I have neither love, respect, nor pity. I have run too great a hazard already respecting reputation, from not being able to prevail on my too flexible nature to urge her to send me home according to agreement. The decorum and quietness of my conduct have long been a tacit reproach and a secret constraint to her; yet has she been too much afraid of those censures which I should have disdained to circulate, to venture on my dismissal.

One day stole away after another, while I was waiting to gain Lady Winchester's protection. Of that no hope is left; nor is her departure yet fixed;—mine can no longer be delayed. Surely

I must have grown weak and vapourish by living so much alone, since crossing the channel appears to me an effort ; especially as it will restore to me my Amelia, and my native country. It is only by quitting it that we can know how we value locality of situation. Occupied by our feelings while embosomed among our friends, all external objects appear trivial and uninteresting ; but once removed far from those dear to you, every scene of home preserves a superiority in your mind, every national face has a charm for your eyes.

Oh, my dear ! you will not wonder that I almost supplicate for wings to fly to you, when you know the hands into which I am fallen. Could one have supposed that the utmost malevolence of fortune would have bade me owe protection to a mistress of Lord Westbury ?—a contemned, cast-off mistress, too ! You recollect how I first found his picture—in the letter of an angry woman, whose history Mrs. Ellison would readily have told

me, had the refinement of my own nature allowed me to hear it. By an oversight on my part, Lady Killarney got this miniature, and with matchless confidence called it her own. A thousand distressful recollections were blended with the anger which this conviction excited. However, she did not think proper to maintain a right which she feared not to assert, and I recovered the picture. I tremble both with fear and pleasure in thinking that I now shall so soon see the original; for since I have ceased to hear from Lord Westbury my life has passed in doubt, irresolution, and misery. I cannot do better than choose this moment of revived courage to go to Lady Killarney, and propose my journey home.

* * * * *

What a strange, inconceivable woman am I with! in whom instability is as productive of vice as the love of it. Every other day she spends in concerting a new plan of pleasure; and the intervening one in fretting over some odd disappoint-

ment. I have long owed it to myself to quit her.

This morning I found it so difficult to get to her apartment, that I really began to conclude myself a prisoner in my own. She came at length into a room between our chambers, to give me an audience; and, by the studied elegance of her undress, convinced me that she expected a lover, and one whom I should not be allowed to see. Not even wishing to guess at what I might perhaps blush to understand, I declared, in as few and as civil words as I could, my intention of going back to England. She cast on me a quick glance of delight and surprise, which I cannot account for; then, recollecting herself, yawned, and, adjusting her handkerchief, said that "she was sorry I had taken it into my head to be discontented, but that she had no idea of either soliciting or constraining me: therefore, in performance of her promise, her chaise and servants should go with me to Calais whenever I chose." I was glad to find this so

easily settled, and named the day after to-morrow.

My spirits are all afloat at having arranged a disagreeable embarrassment ; and although I cannot part, possibly for ever, with the interesting Amelia Fermor without deep regret, even that gives way to the sweet emotion which arises in my heart at the thoughts of so soon seeing those most dear to me. Ah, how should we know the delight peculiar to a re-union, did not fortune sometimes separate us !

I have a great deal to do in this short interval, and must give every moment that I can spare to my interesting novice. Adieu !—When once again I set my foot on English ground, no more travelling shall I say for

Your

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LXXVIII.

TO LADY KILLARNEY.

NOTWITHSTANDING all your tutoring, you cannot imagine what a fright I was in when this formidable Lord really came—however, as it appeared, with very little reason; for he did not seem even for a moment to suspect any artifice.

Upon my word, you had an opinion of my insensibility or his, thus to leave me and this charming Englishman together! I never saw a man of my own country half so engaging. He has such life, such rapidity in his ideas; such an animation of countenance and air; such an unstudied, unvarying politeness, that I am almost afraid to think of him, lest I should think of no one else.

It was near two when he arrived; and I greeted him with a face as demure as Miss Cecilia's own. It was my place, when

we had bowed and courtesied sufficiently, to speak; and I assured him that I was a partaker in his chagrin for our sweet Cecilia's confinement, but that I hoped the necessity I was under of thus introducing myself, would rather prejudice him in my favour than against me. He replied, with a tender sigh, "that the interest I took in Miss Rivers's indisposition could not but awaken his gratitude as well as regard. Thus prepared," he added, "to esteem each other, by both being dear to the most charming of women, we might at once pass over those empty forms by which cold hearts and narrow minds alone could be circumscribed." Out then he came with such a volley of inquiries, that, had he not spared me the trouble of answering half of them by forgetting their purport, I certainly should have been exposed to detection. However, by only speaking when I could not avoid it, and asking him such questions as partly guided me in answering, I came off unsuspected. I was on the watch: and as he was not, I

must have observed had he been struck with any thing I said.

Lord Westbury seemed much mortified at the cool message I delivered in the name of his fair one; but, after a momentary rêverie, shrugged up his shoulders, and consoled himself with the idea that sickness always chills the heart and hurts the temper. "Dear creature!" sighed he to himself, "how should she judge of an ardour like mine? You have learnt, Madam, she tells me, our story from herself; of course, know that this world can give no recompense to a merit so exemplary as my Cecilia's?" "Oh, never!" cried I, with a sigh like his own, and a wise shake of my empty head, at an address which I hardly comprehended and could never believe. "I am vain enough," resumed he, "to think that all the happiness this world can bestow, my beloved may share with me. How then must I be afflicted at an indisposition which not only deprives me of her company, but absolutely shuts her up from society! Let

me implore you to watch tenderly over her, while I seek for a little country retreat to which she may be speedily removed. You will perhaps, Miss Eliza, have the goodness to accompany her. Mrs. Forrester will soon join you; and, among us, I would fain believe she may yet recover that health, which her too great sensibility and a train of grievous events have contributed to impair."

I now, as we agreed, hinted my apprehension that the bigotry of the cloister had seized on her weakened mind: but this he made light of, as proceeding merely from disappointment and sickness. Perhaps he thought a nunnery a ridiculous idea when compared with his society; and indeed I am, if so, wholly of his mind. What would the hooded sisters have said, had they heard all the anathemas he thundered out against the gates that so despotically enclosed his sick love, and shut him out? Then with what gravity, too, he entreated my pardon! adding, with a soft smile, that if I had ever

known the passion which I was calculated to inspire, I could not blame his fretfulness. I as politely answered, that a full knowledge of the passion was not necessary to dispose every one to sympathize in any suffering of his. The thoughtless mortal was so wholly occupied in fabricating fifty fond messages, which he soon after repeated, that my compliment was lost upon him. However, I did not forget to ask for our friend Forrester's letter; though I do not perceive any use we can make of it. A tedious fool! what a history does she make of particulars we do not want to know, while she writes nothing at all of what we really desire to find out!

What a lucky wretch is this to enthrall, and honourably too, a man like Lord Westbury! How many arts must she have played off, to excite not only such a love, but a veneration beyond expression! How or where they could meet, to get at once on such familiar and such honourable terms, I cannot possibly

conjecture. Deuce take Goody Forrester for being so loquacious and so uninforming! Let me see you as we agreed, for I have a rich thought to impart. We must be very cautious; for Lord Westbury has eyes so penetrating, that I think, every time he opens his mouth, something which I cannot answer will certainly issue from it, and then I shall be detected.

How provoking is it to know only one woman in the world capable of keeping a secret, and to have her so completely in the way of our projects!

Adieu!

LETTER LXXIX.

TO MISS ELIZA RIVERS.

HOW many people spread their nets every day, and never catch a bird! while hardly have we opened ours before the silly one in question darts her head into the midst of it. This very morning did I

despair of sending off Miss without showing a design,—when, lo! two hours afterwards she comes to entreat that I will let her go! nor once dreams that she is leaving the lover whom she seeks, behind her. I could now kiss her for aiding my views, and now spurn her for daring to interfere with them.

This project of going home is, however, a lucky one for herself; since I am not of a temper to give up a favourite point to one so entirely in my power. I would have had her kidnapped to Ireland; locked up in a loft there; married to my footman: in short, I would have done anything with her, rather than have allowed her to become the wife of Lord Westbury. Insolent, handsome villain! no sooner did I see him, than I found his power over my heart had only been suspended, not annihilated. I met him on a visit the day before yesterday, and I really think he meant to pretend that he did not know me; till a well-acted surprise on my part, and the sound of his own name, obliged

him to use his recollection. But what a frozen politeness did he treat me with! what a profound complaisance!—Yet will I govern that haughty heart of his, or break it. I affected not to know that his lady was dead; nor was I obliged to inquire after her—our deep court-mourning was such, that his had no particularity. As he conducted me to my carriage, I hinted that I should expect a visit, and might, without flattering him, own that I was glad to see him, since in a foreign country even a national face had an attraction for our eyes. He answered me with so chilling and absent an air, that I had great difficulty to keep down my proud spirit: and nothing but the knowing that I had in his as proud a one to deal with, enabled me to do so.

If I understood Lord Westbury aright, he resides at the ambassador's. I believe that they are cousins twenty times removed: but I dare say the old Countess has it in view to strengthen the connexion by marrying him to the glowing icicle

her daughter. I never can forgive that odious family the impertinence of slighting a woman of rank and fortune, equal at least to their own.

You may be certain, that after this I was in a charming humour to listen to Lord Westbury's "love," his "life," who now persecuted me for an opportunity to open her whole mind to me. When you hear all that passed between us, you will admire at the propriety of the expression.

With some hesitating insolent hints of reasons which she dared not enter into, Miss Cecilia owned that it was her wish to quit me and France. Having uttered this important speech, she fixed her eyes on the ground, as if unwilling to shock me by a glance. Admire at my patience, when I tell you that I stifled my disgust. But I remembered in time, that passion takes the guard from the tongue; and love, joined with ambition, has eyes and ears for ever open.

To-morrow, then, she sets off for En-

gland, and I have agreed to send a carriage and servants with her; less to keep my promise than to assure myself that she is gone. De Sommerive has my permission to follow her in the true spirit of knight-errantry. They are just fit for each other, and will never excite envy or jealousy in me. But for Lord Westbury—no, never shall she hang with the cloying fondness of a wife on his arm, and tell him lengthened tales of my follies or misfortunes. If he will marry, after all he knows of that state, he owes the compliment to me. But whether I am to be his wife or not, never shall Cecilia Rivers become so, if falsehood or truth, wealth or wisdom, can prevent it, solemnly
vows

Yours,

M. KILLARNEY.

LETTER LXXX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

AMELIA! I thought myself the most wretched and forgotten of all my sex, when first I became sensible that I was languishing on the bed of sickness at a little inn: but, alas! I have lived to wish that miserable moment could be recalled. These eyes had then been tenderly closed by their darling object, though no longer sensible of the distinction: now must they be for ever flooded in tears, or raised but to arraign that Heaven which thus, perhaps, severely humbles me, before I am permitted to die.

Alas, my dear! impossible as it once appeared to me, Lord Westbury has lived to become “ungenerous,” “unjust,” “unworthy;” and I still live, though I know him to be so degraded! Is the fault in him,

or in myself? Can it be that these immoral women are really more attractive? Ah! teach me then, ye happier of my sex, the surer arts of charming! I know none but those dictated by honour and by love; and those—oh, how weak and ineffectual have those proved! Yet never can I seriously wish to adopt any other. No: the sense of propriety which saves me from distraction, by saving me from self-reproach, shall always guide my conduct, even though it cost me all I love. Ah, gracious God! have I lived to wish that I could hate the man who was only yesterday so idolized!

I went out early in the forenoon to spend the last few hours with Miss Fermor; but found, on arriving at the convent, that it was a saint's-day, and all the sisterhood were in the church. I recollected, while I was waiting, that I had promised to give my sweet young friend a set of English books as a keep-sake, and drove back to fetch them. The first volume I had left

in Lady Killarney's dressing-room, and ran hastily in to fetch it myself, as the women-servants knew not one English book from another. I however repented my abrupt intrusion, when I saw her seated on the sofa with a gentleman lolling by her in a very familiar attitude. Respect for myself alone prevented my closing the door and retiring, which I might have done unobserved: but there was something so indelicate in the retreat, that I rather thought it the least impropriety to venture in. But imagine, if possible, my astonishment, on his turning round, to perceive that this familiar stranger was no other than Lord Westbury!—the man whom I supposed to be in another kingdom!—the man whom I should have sought through the whole world, before I had looked in Lady Killarney's apartment for him! My confusion, great, incredibly great as it was, you may imagine; but his you never can. He arose hastily, half advanced, bowed, retreated, hesitated, could not

utter a single word, dropped his hat, and, snatching it up, seemed ready to make another bow and vanish.

Almost without motion or voice, I rested one hand on the back of a chair, or I must have sunk to the earth; and thus I remained, with my amazed eyes absolutely riveted on him. All this passed in a moment, though tedious in recital. He at length, recollecting himself, advanced and touched my hand (which for the first time shrunk from him intuitively), congratulating himself on seeing me look so well.—Look well, my dear! at the moment he was killing me! I saved him the trouble of any further finesse, by coldly saying, that “I was sorry any intrusion of mine had obliged him to recollect so insignificant a being as myself, and had only now to request that he would hereafter wholly forget me.” He seemed eager to reply, and, as it appeared to me, in pique; but Lady Killarney interrupted the half-invented speech, and with a look full of triumph and disdain assured him,

that "no apology was necessary to a lady who favoured them with her company unasked and unlooked for."—I could not now forbear in turn interrupting her, and, regarding both with an air sufficiently contemptuous, added, in a tone equally emphatic, "that had the lady been apprised of the *tête-à-tête*, she would have too much respected herself ever to have broken in upon it." I then hastily retreated with an indignant air; but, leaving all my spirit on the threshold of that detested room, hardly could I crawl to my own, where I almost dissolved in tears. Even writing, so long my sole relief, I have hardly power to resort to.

Alas, Amelia! the misery I most dreaded has at length fallen on me: I am at once condemned to despise and to love Lord Westbury! Ah, was not my fate severe enough without this aggravation! How did I pray and wish once more to behold this ungrateful man! I was indulged, only to consummate my sufferings. If he, he whom I thought truth

itself, can thus deceive me, in whom shall I confide?

I have remained in my own apartment the whole day, without power even to keep my word with Miss Fermor. I wonder no longer now at her renouncing the world!—Ah, why have not I a similar asylum to resort to, where I might pass the remainder of my days in deploring the passion which has poisoned them all! I loath society! What graces are left to adorn virtue, if vice wears those of Lord Westbury!

And thus at length is my self-destroying, presuming heart punished for having aspired so high that my faculties dared not follow it. Yet was it not vanity, neither was it ambition, that misled me: it was a fond, a faithful, a weak passion! I was born, alas! with too true a taste for happiness to centre it in self, and educated without any of those refined arts which attract love. Every day, every hour softened my heart, and exposed it to impressions that it knew not how to make; till at last, en-

veloped in a passion but the more dear for being unknown and unfortunate, it preyed upon itself, and wasted in solitary rêveries those opportunities which others employ in fixing the object of their choice. Yet still, as susceptible of regret as if every effort had been tried, the expiration of my last hope is a pang more bitter than that of my last breath can ever be: not even my sense of rectitude, my unsullied virtue, can sustain me. Oh, useless, useless virtue! it was too little for Lord Westbury's happiness, and is now too little for my consolation. Alas! perhaps it only heightens my anguish at losing his heart, by reminding me how well I have ever deserved it.

Pardon my weakness, my incoherence: I write and weep by turns—nay, often together—to relieve if possible this fearful depression.

My clothes lie all around me in confusion. Hardly have I power to exist, much less to prepare for this deplorable journey.

Surely so extreme a confusion indicated an influence that my mind yet held over his! Worse and worse! for what then can excuse his attaching himself to Lady Killarney? Ah, could the whole world yesterday have persuaded me that a woman so depraved would prove fatal to my happiness! That he should come to Paris at this very juncture; that I should from prudence lose all chance of seeing him, by being a voluntary prisoner to save my reputation: yet that, in the most unlucky of all moments, and improper of all places, my eyes should fix themselves on his—is singular indeed, and seems almost fatality.

Perhaps he may yet attempt to qualify his conduct; to vindicate it, even he must, I think, want confidence. But I will be revenged; I will not open one letter, I will not receive one visit:—no: never will I debase myself in my own eyes to regain him. Let the light woman before whom he now bows, enjoy the triumph which her vanity and ill-temper will make short enough. He will, I dare believe, one day

remember, with a tender regret, that gentler nature which he once wholly governed. Amelia! this is the first soothing idea that my sick soul has found. Yes, libertine as he is, Lord Westbury's taste will not allow him long to level me with Lady Killarney; and that virtue which he could not subdue, will hereafter resume all its influence to punish his ingratitude.—But how strangely does my agitation mislead me! Amid my ruined hopes, my fears, my wishes, I had almost forgotten that there lives another whose rights claim my reverence.

I must defer my journey one day longer: I am too ill to set out sooner. Thursday, then, I shall bid an eternal adieu to France, and Lord Westbury. Ah, God! did I think yesterday to join him in this adieu!—Tears, tears, cease to flow, or totally blind me!

Adieu!

LETTER LXXXI.

TO LADY KILLARNEY.

THIS has been an amazingly pleasant morning!—First I had a fine long sermon from Lady Leyburne, which was presented to me with as long a one from the prioress. That envious old soul, mother St. Francis, in spite of all our bribes and *liqueurs*, has betrayed me:—our secret billets, rambles incognito, *petits-soupers*, all, has this malicious bundle of baize and hair-cloth faithfully reported. Mamma is furiously enraged, and threatens to get a *lettre-de-cachet* to shut me up in some contemptible provincial convent; but I shall save her the trouble, and be on the road to Flanders before midnight. Let Madame my mother do penance for her own sins; for, if I really and truly am of the number, I positively will not be made the atonement. I once told her, that if she would maintain an authority

over me, she must prove by what right she holds it; and fame says that my pedigree will not bear inquiring into. My conscience, however, is fearless; and to quiet every other fear, I will get out of her ladyship's reach.

I think I should hardly have dared to entrust you with my secret, but for the exquisite use which you may make of it. Let Brissac be waiting, as appointed, with the disguise, and I shall vanish. My namesake goes in the morning: all Paris will be employed in discussing my elopement, and I think there may be such a pretty confusion made of the departure of the Misses Rivers, as shall prevent Lord Westbury from ever inquiring after the one whom he calls his.....He has just been here, and interrupted this scrawl: it seems that he never once suspected Cecilia of being at home in your house, and came to seek her, leaving the epistle which I enclose. She was hardly ever called Miss Rivers; I have long been known by that name. and as it was me with whom he was ac-

customed to visit here, of none but me will he be told. A little artful ignorance on your side may happily blend us together, to confirm the delusion, and he may become wholly your own.

Adieu! I shall not again see you. When you know the sequel of my story, remember that I have made the sacrifice of my reputation subservient to your happiness, and do not grudge me the lover to whom I fly.

TO MISS RIVERS.

(Enclosed in the foregoing).

IN a moment of astonishment beyond all description, I had the mortification of appearing culpable in the eyes of my adored Cecilia! But did she not take too severe a revenge in a contempt so marked and so bitter? Eager to justify myself, it was not immediately that I recollected I had an equal right to complain. Tell me then, when my heart panted with expected happiness, why you cruelly sub-

stituted a stranger, cold, unknown, and uninterested, to receive my vows, my sighs, my wishes; and, under the pretence of sickness, secluded yourself in the very glow of health from those eyes which you once loved to behold?—eyes that will delight in beholding you, while they open to any thing!

Lady Killarney is not the woman in whose company I could expect to meet Miss Rivers; and perhaps this morning I blushed as much at seeing her, as being seen by her. Inform me where and how you first became acquainted with her, if my hand, my heart are yet dear to you. I tremble lest....but no, I will not tremble. You could not know her principles, her conduct: you have seen only her external advantages, and the specious manners which she can assume to veil her real character. I persuade myself that she is alike ignorant of yours: she must, if you live on terms of friendship with her.

Explain nothing relative to our situation if you again meet her; but, if possi-

ble, avoid that meeting till I have seen you: my injunction from that moment will become superfluous. I will prove to you at once how impossible it was that I should deserve your displeasure, since civility alone could induce me to visit a woman whom I have long shunned.

I have avoided naming you to her, and she has had the prudence to avoid urging me on the interesting subject.

Oh, my love! fear not my faith! but rather think whether your own is not a little violated by this severity, rashness, and vague incomprehensible mystery.

Yours, ever,

WESTBURY.

LETTER LXXXII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Paris.

TO shorten the miserable hours, again I take up my pen: I know not what else to do. It is plain that I am surrounded only with spies. Are we all idiots when in love? Though every passing moment I made a fresh vow not to see Lord Westbury, or even read a line from him, still, still my anxious soul expected some effort on his part: nor could a single person come to the door, who did not make me feel sinking into the earth. Alas! those long, those mortifying hours which I passed thus, he and his Lady Killarney spent, perhaps, in ridiculing a weakness which they never knew! Perhaps....no matter, they are, they shall be nothing to me.

Miss Fermor regarded me as if I had been my own ghost, so cruelly were my

looks affected by my sufferings. I could no longer contain the bitterness of my soul, but, throwing my arms around her, told all its sorrows, all its conflicts. How tenderly did she sooth me! how urge me to call upon my conscious virtue, pride, and even vanity, to save me from sinking under this grief! Alas, my pride, my vanity, my pleasure, centred wholly in Lord Westbury! and I am now nothing but a nameless, heartless, dejected, breathing particle of being, cast out into a dismal world in which I have no interest.

We parted with a profusion of tears. Happy, happy Amelia Fermor! *your* sad days have at least a termination! *you* can no more be exposed to insult or delusion!

She so often and so strenuously urged me to forget, to give up all thoughts of Lord Westbury, that at length I began to believe she must have some reason in addition to those with which I had supplied her. On my remarking this, she owned that I was not mistaken; and that

Lord Westbury's intercourse with Lady Killarney was, as I had conjectured, only a renewal of attachment.

She now gave into my hand many sheets of paper which I saw were in Lady Killarney's own writing, and contained her story, as addressed to Miss Eliza Rivers. I have since perused it, with astonishment both at myself and her. That Mrs. Granville did not know more of this light woman would appear almost incredible, were she not accustomed to see and hear only what her dependents please. That even I did not without any inquiry know her disgrace, is equally surprising; since, even while I lived in Lord Westbury's house, she acknowledges that she had sacrificed not only honour but reputation to him. You shall see the horrible detail in her own words, and mark the regular progress of depravity in the heart that once voluntarily renounces virtue. I look on her, since the perusal of her story, with horror as well as aversion. Merciful Heaven! what do not men risk

with women like this! I think I see her cruel hands steeped in human blood:—an attachment to one who is a fury even in her love, gives me a fear for Lord Westbury's very life. I am almost tempted, as a parting present, to send him her detestable story.—But why should I distress myself about him? Does he seek me? Does he deign to attempt soothing that poignant resentment which he must know me almost expiring under? Regardless of the pangs which he occasions, he considered my happiness only while it included his own. He dares to glory in his vices—ah, never may they become his punishment! I will not wish revenge upon him:—no; nor on her either. Always remembering the respect due to myself, not all the agonies which my heart endures shall extort from it one reproach, one solicitation.

This indiscreet, vain, vicious woman exposed her misconduct, you will see, only to gratify herself by dressing up the tale with a romantic grace. I have always observed her person and her mind to be

so equally the objects of her self-love, that, not content when either was flattered, both must be represented as unequalled, or she be discontented. The giddy girl in whom she confided, not a whit behind her in vanity and weakness, read this story to the boarders, to show that she had it; and then exposed her nominal romantic friend by leaving the manuscript on a seat in the garden; where Miss Fermor found it.

When I returned in the evening, Lady Killarney was gone abroad, having left compliments and necessary directions for my journey in the morning. I know not how I could have supported the adieu which she has haughtily spared me.

It is now three, and at six I depart: no closing eye-lid reminds me of the hour; I number those that pass by my tears. However, I will try to sleep:—may no mischievous dæmon interrupt the repose I pray for, by presenting the image of him who robs all my waking moments of comfort!

I shall bring the curious story with me: it may be a check on her malevolence hereafter: a mean soul must be treated as such. Could noble ones early learn that lesson, it might save many such bitter tears as now fall from the eyes of your

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LXXXIII.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

HOW mortifying is it to confide even to a friend our mortification! especially when, as in this case, that friend soothes many of his gouty twinges with hopes of participating our pleasure. I know too well the high opinion you had formed of my bride elect, to imagine that you can hear all I have to disclose with indifference. You have seen her tears, you have heard her groans; you have witnessed my mad adoration, my implicit

confidence; you have known me, in short, for as silly a fellow as ever wore the fool's badge bestowed by master Cupid. After thinking of Cecilia Rivers, and her only, for two years; while I became for her sake an anchorite to the rest of her sex: after wishing my wife every day that rose in heaven, and consigning her as soon as decency allowed to the earth; after flying across the channel in a transport of impetuous passion to demand my Cecilia; I find her—what? an arrant jilt!—a cursed dissembling Jezebel! who, weary of waiting the effect of her refined arts, has sacrificed them and me at once! has proclaimed herself—I cannot repeat the coarse name which she merits. And what a curious figure do I make when thus grossly taken in! I have thought few eyes quicker than my own; but Heaven, for some wise purpose no doubt, dimmed my mental perception proportionably. Yet who, cry I every moment, (as obstinate dupes ususally do) who would not have been deceived?—who would think it pos-

sible that a purity so unswerving could have been assumed? When I call to mind her language, manners, actions—when, again, I seem to behold those chaste yet tender glances which never were bestowed on any but myself, (at least I thought so) I could almost doubt my sight, hearing, understanding; all of which have had their share in this mortifying conviction.

I am almost tempted to imagine that she never knew the object of my journey; for, at the very moment when a fond fool languished to invest her with title, fortune, splendour—those powerful fopperies which in the female world so often outweigh merit—that she should throw off the mask, and publish her infamy, seems utterly incongruous. But perhaps this step might be indispensable: her shame might be visible to every eye around her but my own, and she ventured not to undergo the further scrutiny of those of a lover. It must be so: she is not worth the paper I blot with her name. The sport of a French fop, let her sink beneath his scorn; let her

learn by sad comparison to estimate the man whom she has insulted, and then—why then, if she can repent, let the sin become its own atonement.

I seek even in Paris for another topic in vain: we pursue the usual routine here. The toilette, the opera, the assembly, claim their turn, and pass in one general insipidity. I help to fill a box without hearing a note, and flirt with belles whom I can hardly be said to see.

Lord Winchester (you know his formal style and our relationship) makes it a point to persecute me with civilities. Our set here laugh at me, and hint that this is because I have lost my wife: and, truth to say, they may not be much mistaken; for Lady Winchester and my lady had a most polite but implacable aversion to each other—occasioned, as the latter told me, by some inadvertent claim she had made in her bridal days to that precedence which the court calendar gave her. Death, however, having taken place of Sir Clement Cotterell, and adjusted this family dif-

ference, the old Countess relaxes her austere countenance into something which she calls a smile, whenever she sees your humble servant; while her blooming daughter adds to a look compounded of sense and sensibility, a blush so exquisitely fine, that, did it not vary, we should think her more indebted to art than nature. Lady Diana Selwyn had not quitted her frock when last we saw her. She was a playfellow of mine, you may remember; and whether the recollection of those hours, or any other cause, gives her beautiful features that touching embarrassment which I cannot but perceive, it is impossible to say: certain it is that I partake it. Nothing can be so awkward as to meet in graceful womanhood those sweet creatures whom one is used to caress, carry, make one's very own, in the playfulness of infancy. The fear of being too free, or too formal—in short, it is a most puzzling situation.

Lady Diana, however, has a pure and polished mind, and we now begin to en-

ter into each other's characters ; adopting alike an agreeable gaiety, authorised by a relationship hardly more than nominal. With this sweet creature I have a general invitation to trifle, dance, and sing, all day ; with her mother play faro all the evening ; and with her father tell stories and laugh half the night : and this I do almost every day of my life, merely because I will not be so very, very wise as to give way to the mortal chagrin that devours my heart, and quarrel with the whole world.

I would give you a week to guess whom I first met with after I arrived here : no less than my old plague, Lady Killarney ! who has contrived to get rid of her husband already, in a duel : (for she I doubt not was at the bottom of the affair, as his antagonist was a very pretty fellow, and one of her quondam lovers.) I was disposed to drop the acquaintance : but the lady stood in too much need of consolation ; and having fixed an hour for seeing me, after much weeping, and many accounts

of all her heroic sufferings for pure love of me, she gave me to understand, that, as we both were now at liberty, she expected the *amende honorable*. And 'faith, had his most Christian Majesty made the same demand, I think it would not have distressed me more to appear in his royal presence lightly accoutred in my shirt, with a rope round my neck and a torch in my hand, than to have led such a bride up to the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, I knew that we might accommodate ; and, rather than be plagued, it ended in our usual arrangement.

With two ladies to amuse me, you would think I might forget the third ; but I only miss her the more. Lady Diana wants the charm of passion—Lady Killarney that of purity : she is the very same being whom I always knew ; insipid when at ease, and turbulent when otherwise ; equally void of the simplicity of innocence, or the variety of vice. She cannot even guess at the exquisite refinement of

the female heart, when it seeks its dearest happiness in forming that of the object beloved ; when it almost reluctantly resigns its own elevation at the entreaties of the favoured lover ; while modesty hovers on the downcast eye lid, and the mind seems half ignorant of the wandering of the senses. Once, and once only, I thought that I had found this being ;—a creature in whom the woman and the angel were so happily blended, that to see her was to love, to hear her was to revere ! But to be deceived by a woman was the first error of our sex, and has since become its just punishment.

I grow weary of my widow already, and foresee a quarrel : both are so disposed to it that a single word will suffice ; and what word is that, think you ?—Diana ! Lady Killarney insists upon it that the lovely eyes of Lord Winchester's daughter are fixed with predilection on me, and with aversion on her ; and would prohibit all due attentions to the sweet girl on my part. However, the day is past when her

prohibitions had any influence; and I think I perversely hold Lady Diana's hand the longer in mine whenever it is given me. Then what a storm follows!—Without just claims to any absolute merit, Lady Killarney would monopolise all; and never hears a word of commendation bestowed on another woman, that she does not think it a theft from those due only to herself.

Ah, Cecilia, Cecilia! why didst thou undeceive me? I should not have found

“Cassio's kisses on her lips.”

Despicable idea! ought I not to commend, on the contrary, her candour? Even in her infamy she preserved a generosity, and would not suffer me to stigmatise myself. Far from arraigning, I should thank her for thus flying away, as well as for those happy, happy hours which I passed while persuaded that she deserved my love, and repaid it:—dear was the pleasure, and sweet is yet the recollection! To be deceived can only render us the jest of

those whose vices teach them eternal suspicion, and whose experience is heart-drawn: it surely calls for the compassion of the generous. But why should I make any claim on the one or the other? She will never for her own sake name me; and I must, if I cannot forget her, at least keep my own secret. A few more words, and I will have done for ever with so worthless a subject. I wonder how the devil I have patience to write about a woman whom I never think of with any. You know how I left you;—almost fancying the packet at anchor while it was cutting rapidly the waves, favoured both by wind and tide, and the horses asleep while on full gallop. Arrived at length at Paris, I flew to the convent, and, directed by Cecilia herself, inquired for another miss—as she was too ill, she wrote word, to leave her chamber. There seemed to be something mighty shrewd and mysterious about this confidential girl, as I have since recollected; but, at the moment, my agitated heart thundered forth

such a torrent of anathemas against those gates which shut up my love, that it is well his Holiness had not power to punish me. During the tedious days while I was waiting Cecilia's convalescence, I accidentally met with Lady Killarney; and, lo! one morning into her dressing-room walked, in glowing health and with perfect confidence, that very damsel whom I thought dying in a convent! The situation in which Cecilia found me, I must confess, did not favour my recollection: I felt like a knave, and looked like a fool. She took advantage of my embarrassment, and, coolly loading both the peeress and myself with bitter reproaches, left the room with all the pride of delicacy and spirit of injured love. I had some difficulty in appeasing Lady Killarney, as well as in considering how to vindicate myself, while reproaching my offended love; for her very assurance persuaded me that she must have a consciousness of propriety on her side. My letter, however, produced not a line in answer. Another day passed,

anxiously enough on my part; when, sauntering in the walks, I had the supreme felicity of hearing a little brisk Abbé reciting the particulars of an English lady's elopement, in man's clothes, with the Marquis Louvigny. I listened with the utmost *sang froid* till the name of Rivers caught my ear. In the transport of my rage, at hearing what I thought so unjustifiable a slander, I very nearly shook his little soul out of his little body; and, on his persisting in the account, hastened to the convent; where, to put the matter out of all doubt, I asked for the prioress herself. She confirmed in full the odious detail, and would have given me a train of particulars.—But what after this had I to learn?

Miss Rivers, once so reserved, once so chaste, has been the news, the jest of Paris! Wherever I go, I hear her name, her story, her elopement discussed: bursting with spleen, I am obliged to sit silent, and think myself happy that my feelings are unknown. Lady Killarney,

finding that Cecilia was among the many whom she accuses me of loving, from what passed at her house, maliciously treated me with the tale, amplified by female invention; and I was obliged to hear it. How do I abhor scandal! Can it make us better, to be told that half our acquaintance are good for nothing? Does not such knowledge, in reality, chill that philanthropy which is the purest of our enjoyments?—The fine eyes of Lady Diana ask me often why I am so abstracted; but she never opens her lips on the subject that would inform her. That ridiculous jealous-pated Lady Killarney has almost infected me with her folly about this sweet girl. I am sometimes tempted to try whether I can derive happiness from my vanity: were I a woman, I should certainly do so in mere contradiction;—but, alas! the wound yet festers in the heart of

WESTBURY.

LETTER LXXXIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Dover.

FROM a weary pilgrimage I return once more to my native country: but I kiss not with a gladdened heart the soil from whence I sprung. O cliffs, viewed with such delight by the long absent mariner, why is it my hard fate to behold you again with an anguish more poignant than that with which I lost sight of you! Why does not a journey that once more brings me near to my Amelia, elate a heart so fond, so susceptible! Yet what influence can even this idea have over her whom self-preservation no longer actuates! I saw the waves break almost above the vessel without the smallest apprehension: I was only dear to myself, from thinking that I was dear to Lord Westbury.

My lonely, dismal journey was followed by a rough and dangerous passage. I was not, however, without company of my own sex in the packet. I had passed and been overtaken often on the road by an English family, consisting of two ladies in mourning, and their servants: I joined the former in the vessel, by whom I was very kindly received. Happily I had it in my power to return their politeness by tender attentions; for even their maids, as well as themselves, were incapable of moving, from the usual effects of the element. Alas!

“The tempest in my mind
Did from my body take all feeling else,
Save what beat there.”

After being tossed about for eighteen hours, we were landed; so thoroughly worn out, that even now my chamber appears to rock. Colonel Percival's coach was waiting here for his sister and niece (Mrs. and Miss Egerton, my fellow-travellers); and they have entreated me to allow a

maid of theirs to take my place in the diligence, that they may have the pleasure of setting me down at my friend's house in town; which they merely pass through in the way to Bath, where Colonel Percival resides, to whom they are going. This attention to a stranger is soothing and flattering; not but they must know from whose protection I come, as the coronet and servants of Lady Killarney attracted their notice on the road. There cannot be a truer test of a woman's heart, than a delicate consideration for those of her own sex whom chance or misfortune may throw upon her kindness. Miss Egerton has a sweetness and condescension which appear intuitive:—the happy art of becoming familiar, without being impertinent. Curiosity seems in her only a desire of obliging; and her own frankness, the simple consequence of having nothing to conceal. Happy, happy girl!

* * * * *

I have been obliged to walk myself to death, that my obliging young companion

might see the castle: an officer acquainted with Colonel Percival had called on the ladies, and offered to become our cicerone. An immense number of steps conducted us to the top of the highest tower; where, after having bestowed a complaisant note of admiration on every thing, we both made the secret discovery, that this curious castle contained nothing worth a wonder.

Let me find a letter from you on my arrival, or I know not how I shall exist. How strangely does every thing seem changed since I left England! The very soil looks bleak, barren, melancholy! yet the sun, even now, shines on the spires of Calais.

Naturalists, I am told, assert that we cannot die while the slightest wish to live remains. Ah! how then can we live, when we even supplicate to die! when the world, far from offering comfort or pleasure, is an object only of dread! when every eye seems to dive into your oppressed heart, as if to drag forth the ran-

kling secret which few would compassionate!—for, alas! so general is falsehood, that credulity alone is censured. Your sympathy, my Amelia, is all now left on earth for your poor friend,

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LXXXV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

EVERY hour of my life teems with new sorrows—new surprises. Judge what I felt when I learnt from your brother, on my arrival in town, that Lady Westbury was dead—and a whole month ago!—Alas, in what a manner, too!

Was it not a sufficient affliction to deprive me of himself, without a dissimulation so mean? That there should, at this critical juncture, be a general mourning, is among the many singular incidents which have combined to determine my untoward destiny. How feelingly does your

letter of to-day convey to me your astonishment!—But what is that to mine? Could Lord Westbury really say that he was going to Paris only in search of me? Is it possible that he should still have entertained a thought of marrying me?—What complicated baseness!—And why should he thus degrade his own character? The miserable wretch, who once thought herself his choice, was not of consequence enough to demand from him a reason for his conduct, or even to arraign it. Wherefore presume on his influence to involve you in an affair so humiliating?—“To be married at Dover!”—“Travel through France!”—Of such proposals, in pity, tell me not!—bitter aggravations of a calamity already killing! Name him no more with an ardour so generous; he is false, cruel, ungrateful, and mean. What avails it, then, that he is insinuating and lovely?—You cannot but conclude that Lady Killarney’s light conduct would lead me to suspect her in every instance; but had she been guilty of duplicity to

me, would she have suffered me to see Lord Westbury?—Would he, in short, have been in her apartment, on terms so familiar, had he been worthy my heart?—had he even desired to retain it?

Yet, had I known of his lady's death, I think I should have lingered—I think I should have made an effort again to meet him: but so many chances combined against me, that I must believe the event to be the ordination of Heaven itself; and ought, perhaps, to be grateful that he breaks my heart by a single blow, rather than the fluctuations of matrimony.

On reflexion, I am induced to believe that he really meant to follow the plan he disclosed to you: but his light heart met first with one less delicate than mine, and all his just resolves were lost in a gross attachment. He wanted courage, I suppose, to avow his own unworthiness, and therefore shunned your poor Cecilia. But Lady Killarney's triumph would have been incomplete, had she not brought the victim to witness it. Then I had, how-

ever, my revenge; for ages will never erase his confusion from my memory.

The letter which he supplicated you to send by him, he found, when his sentiments were thus changed, it would be convenient to suppress; for never, believe me, did it reach my hands. The profligate pair, perhaps, amused themselves with reading it; and the tender congratulations of friendship, if construed into proofs of my vanity and ambition, have only supplied food for the mischievous raillery of the abandoned Lady Killarney. Perhaps, and indeed that is more probable, some small remnant of decency might prevent my Lord from offering me so poor an insult as the delivery of your precious packet.

Dear, generous Amelia! how ardent, how kind, are your expressions!—"Reside, henceforth, with you!"—"Amuse, as far as possible, the sufferings of my heart, in the fond participation of your domestic happiness!" Alas! my dear, I am no longer capable of participating it. My tears would quench your smiles, or

those smiles rend my nature in pieces, by continually reminding me of my loss: and if I formerly wished the sea between me and Lord Westbury, I now wish the whole world. Never, never more let my eyes behold him!—all other ills I hope I can endure. I can, otherwise, waste away without complaining—expire without a groan.—Then—alas! I know not what—no, let the days that remain to me pass among persons who, being uninformed of my feelings, can never wound me by references to the past. Unobserved and silent as sands steal through an hour-glass, let me sink into my only asylum.

How strange, how incomprehensible, are human attachments! Miss Egerton, the gayest of the gay, has suddenly begun to love, cherish, hang fondly over your withering Cecilia. She has discovered my dependent situation, and implores me to accompany her to Bath. Even her formal mother is prevailed on to enforce this request; and my weakened mind, shrinking from the arduous and irksome task of tuition,

requires at least an interval to form itself for the future. I have reason to think that I shall rather confer than receive a favour; and in Miss Egerton shall find all the social sympathy I now dare hope for, since she reads, thinks, and writes; and while her manners have the volatility incident to her years, her heart possesses all the virtues of maturer life. She has made herself far more than any woman I ever saw; for Nature has been very cruel to her person, leaving it no advantages but a pair of handsome dark eyes, and the prettiest, whitest hands in the world: yet, in spite of this limitation, she throws such an inconceivable drollery into all she says and does, that you are pleased ere yet you understand her. Her mother has many personal charms, and hardly seems to be forty: she has a complexion uncommonly fresh, and a precision of dress not usual among women of birth (for she was a Percival), or the wives of officers. She avows an aversion to fashion, in all its modes and forms; yet her

daughter dresses in the highest *ton*, while, in compliance with her mother's whim, she adroitly reprobates every elegant ornament she puts on.

Miss Egerton is peculiarly situated as to fortune, though her father left a fine estate behind him. The heir, who inherited by entail, conscious of many obligations to Mr. Egerton, voluntarily pledged himself, as soon as he came of age, to secure to the young lady twenty thousand pounds : but, alas ! he lived gaily at college, and became consumptive. Mrs. Egerton prevailed on the young man to go to the south of France ; whither she, with her daughter, accompanied him. There he lingered till he was within two months of twenty-one, and then died, without any right to bequeath a shilling. The next heir at law, now in the East-Indies, and a stranger to this part of the family, necessarily inherits the whole ; and Miss Egerton has no prospect of fortune but from her mother's brother, Colonel Percival, with whom they are going to reside.

That gentleman has, likewise, a nephew of his own name ; and, as I guess, wishes to unite the claims, as well as the persons, of the young people : but at this idea Sophia puts up her lip as saucily as if she were both a beauty and an heiress.

Mrs. Egerton has taken lodgings in Soho-square ; and if I fail going there some part of every day, I have message upon message, and at last the young lady herself, to fetch me. Your sister-in-law adores her ; but, indeed, my young friend took a sure way to her heart, by romping with the children, distracting my poor head, and letting them tear in pieces all her beautiful muslin dresses :—but she is young, full of overflowing spirits, and happy.....Happy ! oh, misapplied, useless word ! Lives there a being whom we can rationally call happy ?—I, at least, may be pardoned the doubt.

Disappointed, forsaken, and forgotten, weary of an artificial, fraudulent world, in vain I retire into my own heart for consolation. Love has overturned the sober

structure which content once raised there, and reigns amid the ruins; as incapable of fabricating another, as I am of expelling him. Every thing without disgusts, and nothing within cheers me. Amelia, I was once beloved!—Oh, that cruel *was*! how have I forfeited this only blessing? If to look among his whole sex, without seeing one worth a wish but himself—if to wait tedious years in humble hope of the moment that destroyed me, be to deserve Lord Westbury, all this I have done. Alas! perhaps a consistency so strict undid me! Accustomed, as he had long been, to caprice and volatility, I might better have kept his affections, had I tortured him with uncertainty; for, though men affect to despise us for wanting virtues, they rarely, by distinguishing those virtues, encourage us to cultivate them.

I entered the world with many disadvantages; for I was ignorant of all its ways. A child of God and Nature, the upright minister of both, had taught me to avow

every feeling, to utter every sentiment, and to believe every human being just till I proved him otherwise, while I encouraged frankness by frankness. — Fatal, noble error of my father ! an error hardly ever found in high life. For what is this basis of polished society, this knowledge of the world, but the science of hypocrisy ? So firmly are my first principles rooted, that even now I had rather become a dupe to the arts of mankind, than a slave to their meanness. No, Lord Westbury, you may despise, neglect—nay, hate me ; but even to avoid that misfortune I would not stoop to become a hypocrite, or to hate and despise myself. I would fain choose another subject ; but years of reflexion have so interwoven this with my being, that death alone can separate them.

Love, then, to me is nothing ; or, if any thing, only an addition to my evils. The present moment I merely wish to lose, nor do I hope more from the future. In recalling the happy hours of youthful friendship, I find my little all of satisfac-

tion.—Dear were those hours in possession, sweet in recollection ! Ah, why can they not be repeated ? It is among the attractive evils of society, that, when once we have entered its busy circle, retirement can never recover its charms. Time takes from our hearts a greater advantage than it gives our understandings ; and though we know our daily enjoyments to be only illusive, we cannot resolve to resign them. Yet still we covet, with many a sigh, the happy simplicity which we knew not how to value till it was lost, and despise the wisdom which enlightens us in vain. In short, from the moment we discover that we have nothing more to know, all we do know becomes either indifferent or disgusting.

I mix my tears with yours for the loss of your angel :—but she is happy ; her heart will never feel what mine now is bursting with. How gladly would I exchange fates with the Cecilia already at peace in her little coffin !—May your own

namesake console you for the loss of mine!

* * * * *

Miss Egerton has just left me. I have, at length, yielded to her solicitations, and am to set out with her for Somersetshire in a few days. We make a circuit, to visit a family lower down than Bath, and pass, as I should think, very, very near you. Alas! that in doing so I should not dare to wish you would indulge us with a meeting!

LETTER LXXXVI.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

London.

WITH a mind splenetic as mine is, I could find no society in France; and, to conceal the cause of my hasty return, was seized with a convenient fit of gallantry, and offered Lord Winchester my services to escort home his lady and daughter; which his appointment as ambassador did not allow him to do himself.

He was charmed with the proposal; and even the austere Countess deigned to approve it. Lady Killarney threw herself into such a fury at the news, that we made another everlasting quarrel of it; and so here am I, like Shakspeare's Grumio, "as foolish as I was before." I have a strange void still in my heart; an apathy in my pursuits; a gnawing, irritated, devilish kind of sensation. I could almost regret the wife in whose company I had no pleasure, and whose conduct did me no honour;—and, 'faith, very well it was, considering the times we live in, that it did me no dishonour. This house, at once unpeopled with her servants, visitors, and self, looks dull and gloomy; and her magnificent chair, which yet stands in the hall, gives me a melancholy pang whenever I pass. Two months ago I saw her seated in it, glowing with vanity and beauty, diamonds and tissue;—a fortnight more had scarcely elapsed, before I viewed that fair form in a smaller box, bereft of every vital or accidental grace—of jew-

els, hoop, and flowing satin. A small remnant of the latter served to swathe her body, white as itself, and cold as ever was her heart to all the duties and the joys of life.

My poor girls flew to welcome me; but the very sight of their governess gave me the spleen for a week. I caressed the dear little creatures—but what more can I do for them?—Oh, Cecilia, Cecilia! who could have believed that your love for them, and for their father, would thus have ended!

Pr'ythee, Frank, what takes you into the country at such an early season? Never did I want your society more—your, I may say, guardianship. My heart is in that unemployed, dissatisfied, dubious state, when a friend may lead it either towards virtue or vice. Return, and take care of me.—Return, that you may see the most charming of women!—Yes, I repeat it—the most charming! for I am determined, henceforward, to think her so who is the most worthy.—Why

does not my wayward heart second the assertion?

What a game of cross purposes is this life! Here am I, sighing for a worthless, ungrateful girl, while an angel, perhaps, does the same for me. I should not have been coxcomb enough to form such a conclusion, had not Lady Killarney, by strictly watching through jealousy every turn of Lady Diana's countenance, made me sensible that her charming eyes were oftener fixed on me than on any other man; while softer blushes than ever visit the cheeks when the heart is unconcerned, sometimes marked the fear that I should discover this. I honour, respect, admire, the lovely girl, but no more; nor can I persuade myself that passion mingles with those sentiments.

Yet who but such an unlucky mortal as myself could fail to be happy in the partiality of Lady Diana Selwyn? She has a mind refined and informed, manners tinged with the elegance of France, and the frankness of England; splendid for-

tunes (for she is Lord Winchester's sole heiress; nor are the family estates entailed), and birth equal to my own. In short, she has every thing that I could wish in a wife, but the charm which I, unfortunately, can find only in Cecilia Rivers.

Lady Winchester was too ill on the sea to be visible, and Lady Diana found herself unable to bear the closeness of the cabin: their post-chariot had been lashed to the deck, and in that we found very commodious seats. I was there, for I think the first and certainly the only time, alone with the blooming Diana; and as politeness rendered her the sole object of my attention, delicacy made every one else that of hers. As her fine eyes wandered over all the sailors' faces, a throbbing thoughtfulness showed that she perceived not the objects she gazed on; while the least assistance, the most natural gallantry from me, seemed important enough to call forth her blushes.

The land we were quitting formed our subject of discourse. "We should envy

this pleasant nation," said she, "their exquisite sense of enjoyment, were their morals uncorrupted; but they too often find their own happiness in destroying that of their neighbours. Nature, nevertheless, seems to have designed to bestow on them a lot superior to the people of most other countries. The poignant, yet lively, turn of their tempers renders love the amusement, not the torment, of their lives. They never know that melancholy and lasting affection, which dares to sacrifice every selfish view to a romantic constancy, demanded only by the heart which is impassioned."—"You speak with so much sensibility, Lady Diana, that, could I look at you and believe it, I should conclude this English kind of tenderness not unknown to your generous heart."—"I may venture to observe upon others, my Lord," returned she in some confusion; "and, if you would be equally candid, you would confess me to be in the right, since you could give, what is merely opinion in me, the sanction of your experience."—

“ Were I to be as you say you wish me, my sweet young friend, perfectly sincere, I should declare that the appearance of affection is assumed by most women only to serve the mean purposes of vanity and ambition.”—“ Hold, hold, Lord Westbury !” cried she, gaily raising her hand to my lips, “ don’t let us grow sexical (that was her whimsical word, created, as it should seem, at the moment) ; for I never give up my own sex, and you are resolved to have no mercy on it.”—“ Were you right,” returned I with an air of railery, and kissing her hand, “ you might revenge my general injustice by obliging me to adore it all in you.” A long silence followed this little sprightly sally ; but love has had no share in our discourse from that moment.

Lady Winchester is ordered to Bath for her health, and, I believe, presumes upon my continued escort. Did Lady Diana and I meet on fair terms, nothing should part us ; but he must be the worst of knaves, who, conscious of his own bank-

ruptcy, takes into his hands all the treasure of another. Yet so much already am I used to her company and conversation, that I shall hardly know how to supply the void in my days which her absence will occasion. I was born for love, home, and domestic happiness:—its shadow I have chased through life; it now appears in the person of this beautiful girl. No sordid views can incite her to deceive me; born to the inheritance of every advantage which I enjoy, she can promise herself no addition of happiness in marrying me, except she generously sets that value on myself.—But to have all the tenderness on one side:—yet, if that must be the case, it is best, certainly, that the bride should possess it. Women, once anxious to please, have the happy art of finding out the way; and how ungrateful must his nature be who is not won by tender and refined attentions! Love may, from generous motives, be feigned, and from that often becomes real. Were we strictly to examine, we should be astonished to find how many of our

dearest enjoyments owe their origin to habit.

Wherefore should I doubt, hesitate, resolve, protract? Could I have chosen from the whole creation, and, like Pygmalion, made my bride, she should have been like Lady Diana. Her taste on every subject resembles mine. Long used to participate all public pleasures, she only appears abroad in the common course of things; and, seeking her happiness at home, is secure from the seductions of the world, or the vanity of newly acquired honours. The heart asserts itself uniformly in her; from that spring alike her pleasures and her pains; and over that I might, perhaps, obtain a boundless influence. But why this dull preachment to my own heart, which knows her so well? What chance, indeed, can there be of my doing justice to the merits of this charmer, when I am obliged to enumerate them regularly over, like articles in a catalogue? An invisible power, alas! de-

cided for me, and has left my feelings and judgement perpetually at variance.

Salute your lady from me, and think me still

Yours,

WESTBURY.

LETTER LXXXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

AFTER so many griefs, so many evils, who could have supposed it possible that ill fortune should have another barbed dart ready to plunge into my still bleeding heart? I now sink totally overwhelmed, and without a single wish to extract the arrow. Pride and Disdain contend with Love which shall destroy me fastest.

Unluckily I happened to be present a few days since, when Mrs. Layton came to visit Miss Egerton, whom she invited

to go to the play: but to this Mrs. Egerton refused her concurrence, unless I would be of the party. Nothing could be less agreeable to me: but Miss Egerton was urgent, and I knew not how to excuse myself. Mrs. Layton is just arrived from France, where she has passed several years in dissipation. She rouges highly, dresses showily, and is constantly attended by an admitted lover of the name of Clairon, and a train of beaux. She and her party are always my aversion. On the appointed evening, just five minutes before Mrs. Layton's coach stopped at the door, Miss Egerton was seized with a raging tooth-ach, and gave up all thoughts of the play. I meant to do the same; when I found that Mrs. Layton, who could get only a small box, had invited no other ladies, nor could she be prevailed on to stay with her cousin. She ridiculed our English mode of going to public places in couples: but finding she must have a female companion, she would have me. From the reluctance with which I was overborne

by their joint entreaties, our arrangements had encroached upon the time, which caused us to enter after the curtain drew up; when my chaperon, as I surmised she would, attracted general attention. Aware of her style of dress, I had affected extreme plainness and simplicity in mine. The play proved touching; and to prevent joining the Colonel and Mrs. Layton in their opera-glass survey, and loud French criticisms on the box circle, I gave my attention wholly to the stage. In the distress of Sigismunda I had almost forgotten my own; when Mrs. Layton, who at intervals pestered me with questions, suddenly asked me if I had met with Lord Westbury in France. I turned hastily towards her in the greatest confusion and surprise.—“Was he sick there,” said she, “that he looks so pale?”—“Where, where is he?” cried I, almost starting up in agitation.—“Lord, child! sit still,” said she angrily: “why, he has been behind us this half-hour.” Impulse conquered decorum, and I turned

abruptly round. Lord Westbury was indeed standing, with the lock of the box-door in his hand, as if just going out, while his eyes were riveted on me with a bitterness and contempt which I knew not that they could express. Pale, indeed, he looked: but it was evidently the paleness of suppressed passion, not of impaired health. I sunk into my seat in a moment, more dead than alive, and heard the door clap after him. I never felt before as I did at that insulting sound: dark mists obscured my sight, and made the scene and audience one glittering group, while cold tremors struck at my heart; yet, by a strange inconsistency, I seemed all pulse, and one universal throb of indignation. I nevertheless contended with these torturing feelings, lest I should attract still more attention, or awaken a curiosity in my party. The struggle in my soul was relieved at last by a deluge of tears; and as the play supplied an excuse for weeping, I freely indulged myself, that I might avoid dropping from my seat.

When recollection enabled me to look up, I examined all the boxes, to see whither my Lord had adjourned. I soon perceived him nearly opposite, with Lady Diana Selwyn, to whom he was stooping to talk. He asked her, as I thought, to make room for him in a corner behind her; for she did it, though not without incommoding both herself and party. He talked incessantly to her, with both gaiety and passion; while her deep attention, conscious glances, and happy smiles, assured me, as well as himself, of his success, if to please Lady Diana could form his felicity. Oh, think what passed in my soul at a conviction like this! Never, never can I know such another pang! I had no longer the gratification of despising my lovely unintentional rival. Ah, no: I knew that she must deserve a better heart than the one she seemed so delighted to win. Yet, in the midst of his smiles and gallantry, his cruel eye would often glance towards me, as if he was not without the mean design of insulting her

whom he had forsaken; while the lovely creature to whom he addressed himself suspected not that he saw another woman in the house.

So full, so melancholy a proof of his worthlessness conquered my pride, and left me no other feeling than grief. I was not collected enough to employ one womanish art to recal him.—Recal him! did I say? I had even lost the wish of doing so. I could not, however, withdraw my eyes from Lady Diana; but I did not employ them in depreciating her beauty. Alas! its continual augmentation assured me how much it was lighted up by her heart! Rather did I admire to see her imbibe, from the same object with myself, this

“Perfum’d poison that infects the mind,
This sad delight which charms all womankind.”

Could I wonder that she relied on the delusive countenance which experience could hardly enable me to discredit!

Lady Diana retired at the end of the play, attended by my Lord; and I would

fain have done the same: but nothing could prevail on Mrs. Layton to go, who assured me that she had sat the dull tragedy out, only for the sake of the farce. It was a fashionable one, and almost the whole company did the same; which caused a great difficulty in calling up the carriages, as well as in getting to them. Scarcely were we seated in Mrs. Layton's, before it was entangled with a hackney-coach, which tore off the wheel; and, had there been room, we must have been overturned. Colonel Clairon alighted, and, taking Mrs. Layton in his arms (who either was or pretended to be lifeless), carried her into the first house for assistance, leaving me to the care of link-boys and the footmen and coachman, who were all in a swearing debate with the hackney driver. Delicate and shattered as my nerves have long been, I had, however, not wholly lost my senses, when I perceived one approaching who was more likely to rob me of them. Lord Westbury eagerly pressed through the crowd,

while the habit of fond confidence made me readily accept his tendered assistance. He conducted me into the same house whither I had seen the Colonel carry Mrs. Layton.

You must have known the misery of my mind for the last three hours, even to guess at the surprise and exquisite pleasure of this moment — this moment, which promised me all that I could hope! I had not voice to answer his agitated and fond inquiries, and sought to recover it by resting my head upon his shoulder, and sighing—nay, gasping for breath. This blessed accident might awaken all his former passion, and re-establish all my influence: for that he still loved me I could not doubt;—his tremors, his impassioned pressures, his broken tone of voice, all convinced me of that.—Why, indeed, else, had he left Lady Diana? Why had he, afterwards, hidden himself? Why had he flown to my aid? I confess that I was not sorry to find myself alone with him; for he had immediately dispatched the

man to procure drops and water. A transport so unexpected, a delirium so sweet, caused every faculty to be absorbed in love; and though my senses remained, they were wholly retired into my heart. Would you think it possible that Lord Westbury should have chosen a moment like this to affront me? My cloak had slipped aside.....But enough on the odious subject. I revived in an instant; but it appeared to me doubtful whether I should be able to contend with a man more actuated by a licentious than a rational love. The return of the waiter with the wine and drops which my Lord had ordered, obliged him to loose me: but he had made medicine unnecessary, and wakened the pride which least bears insult. I bade the man conduct me to my company; but my Lord, fixing me by an eager grasp to the spot I stood on, bade him begone: and he was obeyed. Disdain and disappointment were then too much for me: I fell at his feet in hysterics, or rather, I imagine, convulsions,

for he was obliged to summon assistance. When my faculties appeared to be returning, he ordered the people once more away. He still held me in his arms: but had they been those of his brother I could not have felt greater disgust. A coldness which he never before saw, was increased in me by a contempt he only could inspire, when I learned from his sophistical, artful language, that I had ever been his dupe; since at the only moment when he could make me his wife, he openly solicited me to become his mistress! I was condemned to the misery of hearing this, lest, if he discerned my feelings before my strength was recovered, I should be too much at his mercy. Charmed at my unexpected passiveness, oh how eloquently seducing were his speeches! My soul struggled with its groans, while my tears almost choked me. But enough of a moment so bitter!—Never, never can I forgive him! Hardly on my death-bed can I pardon him such deliberate licentiousness and inhumanity! When I found my-

self collected enough to answer, I at once cut short his detested speeches.—“ How little,” cried I, “ did I think you, my Lord, capable of artifices so low !—But you shall not disgrace yourself in vain. I perceive that you recollect it to be in my power to prevent your marrying another, by proving your engagement to me ; but you might, likewise, have known that I should disdain such an effort. My claims expired with your merit and your love ; for, believe me, I now hold you as unworthy of my heart as I ever before did myself unworthy of yours. The obligations which it was once my delight to owe you, are cancelled by this base, insidious conduct. I cancel with them all your deceitful vows, your specious promises ; nor shall I ever reproach you with their violation, but myself with too easy a belief. Offer them with the same address to the next wretch who has the misfortune to please you, and they will, perhaps, again be relied on ; but be sure that she is, as now, your helpless inferior. So

may you, whenever you withdraw, have the satisfaction of breaking another heart!" Finishing this with a solemn and half-wild energy, I would have rushed out of the room; but he caught my hand, and obstinately held me. Resentment had nerved, however, both my soul and my frame. "Detain me not!" cried I in a tone that enforced my words; "for I hate you—eternally do I hate you." He haughtily flung my hand from him, and I ran down the stairs. The man told me that Mrs. Layton was gone, but chairs were waiting. I threw myself into one, and was far from him in an instant. Scarce, when I got home, could I suppress a thousand visible signs of my embittered, wounded feelings; but the accident rendered my disorder natural in the eyes of my friends. What days, what nights, have mine been ever since! May you, nor any one, not even himself, ever guess at their misery! To the graces and virtues which Lord Westbury really possessed, fond fancy had added all lavished

among his sex. Imagine, then, the veil being once withdrawn, what I suffer from finding him the very reverse! To approach me with insult—shock me with loose proposals!—And this is the very man to whose delicacy I would, yesterday, have entrusted my own!—Lady Killarney has fully accomplished her views on him, by corrupting not only his morals but his manners. Had he generously told me that he loved me no longer, or even informed me that he yielded to his rank, and took a wife more suited to it—either of these cruel truths I think I could have borne:—he had inured me to misfortune—but I can never, never be inured to disgrace.

Every thing on earth is now, you must see, over with me. In your sympathising bosom bury my little story; and my heart, as soon as may be, in the grave. Heaven never yet formed one, overflowing like mine with softness, that had fortitude enough to contend with so untoward a destiny.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

SO you had rather, Frank, give me up to my own dangerous devices, than half a dozen old justices of the peace to quarrel about politics, or leave your chair at the quarter-sessions empty. Had I applied to your wife, she would have had more charity, perhaps. Yes, the charity of ladies is very extensive; and I should, perhaps, only have served you as you merit, if I had tried to the utmost that of Mrs. Trevilian. To set your jealous heart at rest, however, be it known, I mean to content myself with that of a lady more at her own disposal. I have not waited for your insolent prediction—viz. “That I shall certainly marry soon, and, if not Lady Diana, most probably some one not half so deserving:”—to conclude, that Lord Winchester’s lovely daughter must be born for my bride. In truth, it is

plain to me that the point is already settled by her family, and even wished by herself:—as soon, therefore, as my sables will allow, I have half-resolved to make due proposals; and, in due time, go through a dull ceremony. I have observed that Lady Winchester too often absents herself in a morning, for the opportunities she gives me to be mere accident; and Lady Diana is too much embarrassed when we are alone, to call herself indifferent. It seems, indeed, as if I had every means that a lover can wish allowed me, to study the disposition of my cousin; and as if her disposition would bear the most rigid scrutiny. Lady Winchester, under that title, has invested me with a kind of fond authority over the young lady; which in another way brings her and your friend on the most happy terms of familiarity. She yields, at times, to my opinion, as naturally as if she were born to obey me; then sweetly blushes, so to have yielded;—while at other moments she trifles in a most engaging man-

ner with her own supposed influence, and almost obtains one.

Why, why should the graces and virtues of this sweet girl serve rather to recal to my mind the worst and most ungrateful of her sex, than impress it with the sense of her own merit? I, in vain, know Cecilia Rivers to be so. My heart counteracts my reason, and presents her hourly, not as she is, but as I would have her be. For ever do I seem to see her, as once I too surely did, sunk in fond supplication before me; her sweet eyes (for they still are sweet) giving sovereign influence to the dictates of virtue; while the full tears of innocence and sensibility enriched the vermilion of her cheek.

Unhappy Cecilia! how, how were you at last won from the sacred sense of right, once the rule of your life?—you, who so nobly resisted every impassioned entreaty, even while your bosom throbbed visibly with emotions as soft as those of my own? She could not love another man better: but some practised villain,

who loved her less, made a bolder venture; and when the first struggle with virtue was over, she gave the reins to vice. It is the curse of her sex never to know a medium; they must be either angels or devils. Her French lover has already deserted her. I saw her last week at the play, with some dashing painted courtesan and a foreign officer. More plain, more elegant than ever, Cecilia seemed to wish to evade notice; and, collected within herself, preserved apparently all the dignity of innocence. I had not even perceived her till my own name reached me, pronounced from her lips with surprise, and all her own sweet sensibility. I spoke not, however, one word; but, giving her a comprehensive glance, flew round to Lady Diana, whom I had been seeking; and to her talked such vollies of nonsense, that she must have thought me mad or drunk: and all this, merely that I might appear engaged and happy. Yet still at intervals my eye returned to her, who still gave such wild pulsations to my

heart as it has rarely known. Returned?—it would hardly quit her for a moment. How consummate is her address! Hardly should I wonder to see Cecilia Rivers whatever she once wished to be, distinguished or improbable as her view might at first appear. No confidence marked her carriage—no levity mingled in her air; Virtue herself never looked more awfully innocent: while a voluntary depression seemed almost to unnerve that fair form, and a serene paleness covered her cheek. Those charming eyes, neither seeking nor shunning mine, whenever I met them beamed forth a mild sadness, a weeping sweetness, a something too heart-touching to be described!—I felt ready to start up, fly to her, reproach her, clasp her to my bosom!—and, even while despising her, forget all—nor knew I how to commend in myself the forbearance so highly due to Lady Diana. Once I ventured to compare them; but my fancy so strongly inclined to the charms which it perhaps created, that I tried the ex-

periment no more. Again my own master, by the early retreat of Lady Diana, I retired to an obscure corner, to observe whether my presence had influenced Cecilia's conduct ; but it was still unaltered. She is too new to the box-lobby train yet to allure them ; nor did they appear even to suspect her. The floods of tears which I saw fall from her eyes, gave me a hope that she regretted her conduct towards me. I resolved to have the carriage followed into which she went. While I was giving a fellow whom the box-keeper had found me, the necessary direction, I saw her companion's coach almost pulled to pieces. The Frenchman carried that remarkable lady into an adjoining tavern, not too nice in its reputation ; when, rescuing the darling of my heart from constables and link-boys, I followed the lead, and deposited my young lady in another room. Reason was now extinct in the tumult of the senses :—no sickly delicacy made me recede from her whom I adored, and I recovered the fainting Cecilia in a

moment. What she still hopes from me is beyond my comprehension; but she played off all her usual reserved airs, even with a severity which virtue never gave her. I was thoroughly piqued; and, abating my respect in proportion to the increase of her claims upon it, made her proposals in terms which she ought not to disdain after her own misconduct. But such a thriving pupil the devil never had since the mother of all; for then sighs, tears, hands lifted up to heaven, and fits, were her only artillery. At length she, with her customary eloquence, gave me such a lecture as I shall not easily forget; and attempted to tear herself from my arms. Not finding that, however, quite easy, out came at once the whole truth. With a cold and scornful look, which I shall never forget, she told me that she hated me:—"Yes," cried she more deliberately, "eternally do I hate you!" Incensed at her insolent avowal, I, like a fool, cast her hands wrathfully from mine: but

thinking, a moment afterwards, that I should never find a time or place so convenient to bring this to a test, I flew eagerly after her. She, however, was already gone—vanished as it should seem, for no one knew whither. What is that to me, you will say, if, as she declared, she really *hates* me.

Surely she could not hope again to entrap me matrimonially? Whatever her meaning was, her great purpose is answered; and all my plots upon her virtue severely punished in her loss of it. Whenever I see, I despise her; yet no sooner is she out of my sight, than I seek her unremittingly, still hoping that I may never find her. What a miserable state!—to have esteem and love thus divide and tear the fluctuating heart! Even if she did not *hate* me, she has lost my confidence for ever. I could not but conclude, that all her promises, her vows, were necessary falsehoods; yet her indifference distracts me. Judge, while this confusion con-

tinues in my ideas, how little I can estimate Lady Diana! whose merits need not an advocate even in you.

Yours,

WESTBURY.

LETTER LXXXIX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Bath.

OF London, may I, O God! if it be thy pleasure, have taken an eternal farewell!—London has been the grave of Lord Westbury's honour, and of my peace. Innocent as he was amiable, till wealth and distinction drew him from retirement, what a glory, what a grace was he to humanity! Now—Oh, let me spare my heart the aggravating bitterness of contrasting him with himself!

I was once so near your abode that I fancied I could discern the woods of Arlington: but it was among the miseries of my

fate to be denied the pleasure of visiting it—of pouring forth my tears on your bosom—perhaps of imbibing some little pleasure in the participation of yours.

This place I cannot take the trouble to give you an account of. What are places, time, the revolving universe, to me? Lost in contemplation of my own fate, every faculty is exercised merely by habit, and all my ideas are absorbed in my heart.

I wonder the lively Miss Egerton does not hate me:—but there is, perhaps, a pleasure in propping those delicate plants which seem ready to sink under their own weight; and she may rank me among the human ones to whom this care is a kindness.

No: I have not recovered this last stroke—I never, never can. Internal weakness, hectic heats, a cough, and a pain in my side, give me at length hopes of a release which I little thought a consumption would bestow. Colonel Percival is constantly visited by a physician, who

hinted to Mrs. Egerton, that, without an easy mind, regular diet and hours, constant exercise, and a pure air, a frame like mine must sink under the visible attack. Alas, my dear! if only the first of these be necessary, my fate is determined. Miss Egerton's philosophy ends just where mine begins; and she sometimes scolds me for not fearing death, as if her conscience were as troublesome as her kindness. Were all here like her, I should be the object of universal attention.

This medical gentleman's opinion has, nevertheless, led me to reflect very seriously on this world and the next; but never seemed my mind so reconciled to death. What is it, as the poet says,

“But to close my eyes and shut out day-light,
To view no more the wicked ways of men?”

I was ill qualified, both by nature and education, for the lot appointed me. My heart had been early habituated to every softness of sex and sensibility;—my mind, I may say, drew its resources, its exis-

tence, from these. Driven suddenly into the frozen sphere of high life, where every change blunted and repelled the social principle, one unfortunate moment laid bare my heart, rendering it porous the better to kill its feelings. Two years have done the work of twenty; and I rather watch my declining health with pleasure than regret. The physician mistakes my complaint;—my heart is ulcerated, not my lungs.

I have exhausted my brain to find some topic by which I might beguile you with the idea that I am cheerful; but, alas! whatever begins the song—"he is faithless and I am undone," always concludes it.

Is there nothing unconnected with myself I can describe?—Oh, yes! Colonel Percival: he is quite an original. Imagine a tall athletic veteran, with a military air and a florid complexion, totally crippled by the gout, and storming all day at his servants as he once did at the enemy, till, thoroughly provoked, he

dispatches a crutch after each, as ambassadors for his legs. Think, too, at the same time, that you see his pious comely sister coolly taking off her spectacles, and, while she deposits them in the case, turning up the whites of her eyes and blending with his superabundant curses as many ejaculations. Worn out as much with this over-goodness, he often discharges upon her oaths as fantastical as those of Bobadil; while she sits expecting a little imp to make his appearance in each corner of the room. Whenever she finds the Colonel determined on the victory, Mrs. Egerton hastily gathers up her work, curls her short nose, and flies the hearing of such *blasphemiousness*—as she terms almost the whole of her whimsical brother's conversation. He has long been used to have servants, merely, about him, and affects rough and peevish manners rather to render them observant, than from any natural harshness of character. Whenever he finds his equals have indulgence towards him, he amply returns it. His

niece comprehends this clearly, and rallies his oddities with such a happy mixture of humour and affection, that his eye relaxes its severity at once, and he bears her mother for her sake. As the gout keeps him a close prisoner, some brother-officer or old crony usually drops in to attack him at chess or backgammon; when, except he loses, no creature can be more pleasant. This sets us all at liberty: I retire to my chamber, Miss Egerton goes to the rooms, and her mother hastens to Lady Huntingdon's chapel.

But the morning is the scene of notability with us. Mrs. Egerton rings her bell at sun-rise, and routs the lazy servants, whose hours have long been of their own choosing. Soon afterwards she descends, followed by her own maid with a soft cushion for her to kneel on, and several books of prayer of very formidable size. After mustering the family by roll, that the devil may not inveigle a single soul from her, even at the desire of its owner, she begins her devotions; and an extem-

porary discourse, of some length, is followed by a full chorus. This was such a surprise to the invalids—namely, poor Colonel Percival and myself—that both of us waked the first morning in the greatest consternation. He supplied a symphony, by labouring incessantly at his bell; which his niece at length answered, for Mrs. Egerton would not part with one of her congregation had we both been in the agonies of death. Sophia came bursting with laughter into my room: her odd uncle, with a round oath, having told her, that “he conjectured all the milch asses, with which the town abounds, must have met at his door by agreement, to treat him with a serenade.” The pious lady has since allowed her hymn to be sung *piano*.

Having strong health and abundance of leisure, Mrs. Egerton then follows the maids about the house, till they as devoutly wish her in heaven as ever she wished herself there. Swords, canes, military laced-hats, and well-covered pistols, long peaceable tenants of the hooks round

drawing-room, have all suddenly vanished in one prodigious cloud of dust. Fat Juba, who, in the absence of his master, reigned of late sole sovereign of the arm-chair, unwillingly resigns it; and the cat steals growlingly into the kitchen at the footsteps of this lady.

Her daughter she daily convicts of littering the house in a variety of ways; and your poor friend, between work-bags and music-books, comes in often for an indirect censure; though, as the Colonel has taken the latter under his protection, Mrs. Egerton can only find fault with them, by pretending to believe them to be her daughter's. The flannels, stools, and cushions, on which her poor brother rests his gouty legs, I can see she regards with an evil eye; and I verily believe, notwithstanding the sin of coveting your neighbour's goods, she steals them away one by one.

The doctor having told her that I am not long for this world, she did not delay giving me an information which has

frightened many a sick person out of it. She is persuaded that she shall make a proselyte of me; and daily admonishes me to repent of my sins, as if I had committed all which ever stained humanity. I gravely told her that there was one way, and one only, to make me repent. She eagerly inquired what it might be. "First to persuade me to commit a sin," I answered. The Colonel laughed heartily at this; but his sister was very seriously provoked at me. As to poor Colonel Percival, she persuades herself that nothing but the hope of the inspired moment when he shall be joined to the elect, could warrant her living under the same roof with him. "Oh, is he a *fearful* reprobate!" repeats she hourly: "but the hand of the Lord is heavy on him; and unless he repent—and the Lord, I fear, hardens his heart—what will become of his precious soul!" Thus, in the presumption of her own salvation being secured, though she has not one more virtue than that man possesses whom she con-

signs to perdition, this poor woman makes herself wretched about the eternal happiness of all around her :—extremes, even in goodness, are troublesome enough. Miss Egerton could hardly live with her mother, were not the uncle's fortune the chief dependence of both. Whenever, therefore, the ladies differ in opinion, the younger gets the Colonel on her side, and the cause is carried. It appears to me that the old gentleman is very partial to his niece ; though, she says, he is even more so to his nephew Percival. Indeed he is attached to all his relations ; and his pious sister is so far from neglecting the goods of this life, that she has already wrought upon him to make his will. I was informed of this event by being one of the witnesses ; and as she was in a most harmonious humour, I hope that he has nobly provided for my amiable young friend. Under an affected harshness of manners, the virtues of his profession, generosity and benevolence, lie hid in Colonel Percival. I doubt whether his sister, with

all her piety, could muster two as valuable to society. Above all things in the world he abhors romantic names, and makes a frightful wry face whenever his niece is called Sophia. As to Cecilia Rivers, that he swears to be as affected as Pamela or Philoclea, insisting that I have Italianised plain Cicely, and adopted Rivers; of which, however noble once, he remembers only one man in his time, and he was hanged for horse-stealing. He persists in calling his niece Bess, and me Cicely. These whims at first distressed me; but I now laugh either with or at him, and am rather a favourite, for he loves music. Whenever his sister has routed the servants, and he her, he points to the harp, and cries, "Come, tune up, my sweet singer of Israel: the birds sing best after thunder."

The chief visitor at the house is Sir George Harington, one of the Colonel's Yorkshire neighbours. He is the remains of a man of the town, once fashionable and handsome; who is expected to marry, be-

cause he has a fine estate and no heir to succeed him. Not that he has always lived a bachelor: on the contrary, he was married thirty years. Mrs. Egerton, who was brought up in sight of his house, says that he was always the dread of the fathers and husbands around him; but early in life he met with the pretty daughter of a farmer, who would not dispense with the ceremony of marriage; and, not being able to deny himself the lady, he took her on her own terms. Her example had no influence over his conduct, for wherever his vicious pleasures led him, he rambled; only looking in at home now and then for novelty. Lady Harington, ignorant of love, knew not misery: she brought him two sons, whom she could not educate and he would not. He allowed her, however, to roll to church and her neighbours' houses in a coach and four, which never carried her farther; and the poor woman had the vexation of seeing her children as vicious as their father, before either had reached twenty. Unable to

curb, unwilling to encourage them, that dissolute father was now suddenly obliged to think and to feel. He hardly regretted an elopement which the youths both made to London; where the small-pox carried them off. Their mother survived them only a twelvemonth; and the Baronet, about two years ago, became "a lone man in the world." As he has, in Mrs. Egerton's language, "sown his wild oats," and possesses good sense, good nature, and a fine fortune, it appears to me that she joins many other mammas in this place, in thinking him an excellent match for her daughter. I have told you, my dear, that Sophia is ordinary; but we are upon terms that bring forward qualities far beyond beauty to a thinking mind.

Yours.

LETTER XC.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Bath.

IF I am, indeed, dear to you, my Amelia! forbear the killing kindness of such letters as your last! To cruelty, my heart, by degrees, may grow callous; but the softness of affection brings it so near bursting, that the agony is greater when it cannot do so, than if it did. Already do I feel, severely enough, my own afflictions; but, painted by the animated pencil of friendship, they are too acute for endurance!—let me no longer destroy your tranquillity. Ah! shed no more of your invaluable tears for a fate which I owe to my own imprudence! Do not so bitterly regret your acceptance of Lord Westbury's favours, as subjecting you to silence! Well do you merit, and long may you enjoy, every good, when no

such being exists as the one who now disturbs your repose.

Why think so meanly of me, as to believe that I would owe a poor justice to the interposition of my friends? No, Amelia! miserable as I am—poor, sick, abandoned—I am even now more satisfied than if, dignified by his title, and enriched by his wealth, I felt the want of Lord Westbury's heart, and no longer preserved the privilege of complaint, nor the pride of a virtuous superiority.

Alas, my dear! I feel that I was not born for this world! The dull medium allotted to half its inhabitants, would be a state worse than death to me: nor do I now know aught in it worth a wish but yourself. You, who have been the pleasure of my youth, the pride of my reason, and the partner of my fate!—to you shall I turn for consolation in my last moments, sure to find in your eyes and your voice all the alleviation yet granted to suffering mortality. Ah, that my last sigh could be wholly your own!

In the long intervals which I now devote to reflexion, I have retraced my whole life since first I saw this cruel man, to discover by what means he palliates his conduct to himself. I have seen only one error in my own; and would that the whole of my credulous sex knew how it has been punished! Yes, I fear a mean doubt will always lurk in the heart of a lover who once knows his influence; and, instead of granting you virtue, he ascribes it to himself. Could I have resolutely withheld my confidence, could I instantly have flown from Lord Westbury, why then there would have been, in my opinion, little merit in my conduct; for love could have had no share in it. And if I am reduced to lose his good opinion, or my own, I feel that I must give the latter a painful preference.

I am struggling to obtain resolution to forget him; and have sealed up his picture, letters, every dear and tender memorial, in a packet, which I will send you if you wish it. In hereafter arranging

them, you may, perhaps, take a melancholy pleasure ; and if you do, present them to your children—lead them to my grave, and in your generous tears they will find the moral.

Did I never tell you that my sister has left England? How strangely has my heart been occupied, and my head bewildered ! My aunt took an alarm, from doubtful accounts of her factor's conduct : she hastily embarked for Barbadoes, and my poor sister had no choice but to go with her. I was unluckily in France, or I might, perhaps, have persuaded her to stay. I have not yet had one line from her, nor has she informed me how to direct my correspondence.

If my health is not better, it is not worse. Unable to undergo the fatigue of attending a round of public amusements, I have at length discovered how to avoid it without disobliging Miss Egerton. The Colonel's gout his servants managed very roughly ; and having been used to watch and relieve my father, I one

day suggested some advantageous alterations, and assisted, with a hand so tender and light, that daily does the sufferer bless it; and, in return, takes the same interest in my health as if I were his daughter. It happened that a bet at the rooms one evening left him without a friend to amuse the heavy hours: he became on a sudden so intolerably peevish, that I offered to attack him at backgammon (which, you recollect, I learnt only to please my father when in his condition); and this has made me a reigning favourite. Sir George may feast, Mrs. Egerton pray, and Miss Egerton dance, if none of them lay any claim to my company: and as the Colonel never was so often, or so long, in good humour, I seem to have obliged, by a single mark of attention, the whole family.

This, then, is the present life of your poor Cecilia! She who thought herself born with feelings too poignant to endure one hour of cold inaction, compounds with fortune for the privilege of dozing over a

dice-box with a valetudinarian of sixty-five!—herself but three and twenty!

LETTER XCI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Bath.

“HE cannot be worthy of your sorrow—despise, forget him!” Alas, my dear! were it as easy to do as to say this, of what should I complain! Could we, poor frail mortals, act up to our knowledge, we might, perhaps, be perfect.

There are persons who know not that the whole of life, to a part of the creation, is comprised in the heart: but those who have once fondly treasured every view there, hang over it as a miser over the chest in which he locks his gold; and he would be but little consoled, when robbed of his all, were he reminded by an impertinent observer that he had chosen an unlucky place to hide his wealth in.

You never experienced the sad necessity of these painful torturing efforts.— Yet once I might have forgotten him: but that was before the habit of hoping had determined the colour of my life; for from the moment my heart expanded with the rapture of a mutual confession, it was wedded to his for ever. Long accustomed to believe his mind as faultless as his person, I made Lord Westbury the rule of every action, as the source of every wish. Not even a thought passed untried by this ideal standard of perfection: no thought, indeed, had I, but of and for Lord Westbury. To a heart so extravagantly partial, his approbation was only inferior to that of heaven.—Ah! was it inferior?

Reason thus seemed to sanctify the caprices of fancy, and he reigned sole sovereign over my secret soul. Oh! think, now that he is expelled thence, of the dreariness by which alone my life is marked!

Thus the habits of my heart have long contributed to feed a flame, which, want-

ing other fuel, now preys upon the spot that so long nourished and concealed it; and I crawl on towards death, without one object, hope, or wish, but itself.

“Send you the sealed packet, as the test of my resolution.”—Alas, my dear! did you think that I could keep it sealed till now!

* * * * *

There is something mighty eccentric in this old Colonel; yet has he warmth of heart, and many good qualities. I was left to entertain him yesterday evening, and my eyes were, perhaps, red with weeping; for, after playing at backgammon for a short time, almost in silence, he laid down the box.

“Come:” said he, “I see that you do not know what you are about: ring the bell, and let us brighten up our faculties with a cup of coffee; and, in the mean time, we will talk soberly. What! has my demure sister touched you up your funeral-sermon, or my mad-cap Bess spoiled your new gown? Never mind her tricks, for

she is very truly attached to you, and spends half the time she bestows upon me, in crying you up for a nonsuch."

I could not be insensible to so much kindness, especially as I knew that in showing it he departed from his natural character. With thanks for his inquiry, I assured him, "that none of his surmises were just; nor was it impossible to have many causes for grief, without referring for a moment to a family who all treated me with the utmost distinction."

"Nay," cried he, twisting his foot, and roaring with the pain, "it may be about money thou art vexing!—never mind, child, while we have some amongst us. What am I the better for making my fortune!—This cursed toe would twinge me much the same, if the stool it lies on was made of solid gold.—What! not money neither?—Oh, ho! I shall guess now for fifty pounds; and had I not been an old fool, I might have guessed as well at first: all this pining, I warrant me, is for a sweet-heart.—Ah, ha! I have primed

the right gun then at last? Come! tell me thy vexation, and we'll see what can be done to make thee happy. I have money enough to bestow a little on my little nurse, and Bess won't grudge it to you."

How much true generosity was couched in these common expressions! It at once opened my heart; and, thanking him with a warmth proportioned to the kindness, I assured him, that the grief I felt was among the few which money could not remedy.

"Ay!" cried he; "are you such a chicken yet? I should be glad to know any grief that money will not more or less remedy? So, pray, if you set any value on my friendship, tell me yours."

I could not refuse a request urged from such motives; and, concealing the condition of my lover, told him the simple fact. Whether he was disposed to feel; for I drest my tale in touching language; or whether the tears of a young woman give effect to her words, I know not:

certain it is, that his great chair never seemed more uncomfortable to the worthy man. He threw himself from one side to the other, and thumped his fist on the table, till I started; with now and then an exclamation in proportion to the provocation. When I finished, he shook my hand till my shoulder ached.

“I’ll tell thee what, Cicely: thou hast met with more misfortunes at twenty-three, than ever I did at thrice thy age!—but that comes of being a woman. Od! if thou couldst have sent a bullet through his paper scull, or whipt a small-sword through the puppy’s lungs, he would have thought twice before he would have dared thee to it. Thou art a cursed fool, though, to cry thy eyes out for such a whiffler! Did’st ever see Ned Percival?—he is a pretty lad enough, and a good one too; worth a regiment of such fellows. One day he will come in snacks with Bess Egerton for all that I have in the world, but not unless he takes you into the bargain. We will send for him to-morrow,

and, if he hits your fancy, we 'll have a little snug wedding of our own, on purpose to spite that scoundrel."

Good God, my dear! how strangely are characters compounded! When he saw me sinking, dying, with the unkindness of the man whom it was plain I adored, to imagine that I should have the indelicacy to accept another! Hardly could I conceal my contempt while I coldly assured him that this incident had put a period to all my views in this life.

"Well, well," cried he: "no harm done. Do not have the lad if thou dost not like it: and you are simple enough, I dare say, like many other foolish girls, to hanker after Mr. — No, I do not ask his name; I won't know it: remember, never tell it to me, lest I treat the puppy as he merits, if ever he comes within the latitude of my crutch. But if you still think further of him, suppose you write him word that a gentleman here offers you marriage, but that you cannot give

him an answer till he either claims or releases you. This will put him to a non-plus, and you will soon see if the wind sits in the matrimonial corner."

The idea so instantaneously seized me, that I was astonished I should have waited its coming from such an odd old soul as this. There has, through the whole of Lord Westbury's conduct, been such a mixture of generosity and baseness, that I sometimes think his intellects are touched: if not, he has a temper so capricious, that it is governed by the moment. I have spent three hours in studying a letter of twice as many lines to him. Ah! how are we both changed, since my pen ran not quick enough for my thoughts! This methodical epistle is at last finished and sent.

Oh, letter! fraught with my very fate, arrive at some happy moment of satiety and regret! Recal to his mind the many which he has already received written by the same hand; and make him all that he ought to be, by obliging him to know

what he is! My whole soul is set upon this effort—this last, this only effort!

It is now two; but Sleep and I can have no intercourse till his answer arrive.

LETTER XCII.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

WHAT a lucky thing it was for your wife, nay perhaps for yourself too, that, in St. James's-street, the other morning, we popt our heads almost against each other out of our separate carriages! "Trevilian will be uneasy at my silence," cries the lady: "Do you write to-day, my Lord? Tell him, if you do, that I am safe in town." Now I neither wrote that day, nor the next; yet probably I shall be the informant at last, as your fair spouse hates writing as much as she loves talking. But are not you afraid to trust such a lively little wife with a friend on

the pleasant side of thirty? Pry'thee do not grow indolent as you grow old, and miscall yourself a philosopher; that is a blunder made by half the world, as the vigour of life fades away.

Mrs. Trevilian has, as I prognosticated, rushed into intimacy with the Winchester family; and is for marrying me without mercy, only that she may surfeit herself of my wife's company. She is of my opinion as to the old Countess; viz.—that she throws a damp on the gaiety which she makes it a rule never to heighten.

I dined *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Trevilian yesterday, who employed two full hours in making a panegyric on Lady Diana; when, catching my eye “fixed on vacancy,” she brought me in guilty of not hearing her, and fairly threw her workbag at my head. I could think of only one way of revenging myself on a lady, and was (how you will approve my mode of punishment I cannot say) absolutely kissing her, when the door was thrown

open, and Lady Diana Selwyn announced. *A-propos*—do you know I am of opinion, that had the phlegmatic Socrates been less of the philosopher, Madam Xantippe would have been less of the shrew. Remember this when next you have a tiff with your wife. Well, Lady Diana Selwyn was, as I said, announced; but had I been committing a much greater offence against decorum, her lovely cheeks could not have been suffused with a more rosy blush. I met her with an easy assurance, and saying that there was only one way of ensuring a Lady's silence on these occasions, which would, I hope, be my apology for making her a party, I touched her ruby lip. She had an idea that it would be proper to be angry; but to be so with me was not easy. When she had half-raised her eyes, her heart failed her; and dropping them instantaneously, she exquisitely mingled a smile, a sigh, and a blush. I thought her more divinely handsome than ever. There is a certain lovely apprehensiveness in

the female character, which, never amounting to reserve, yet always approaching to it, hovers perpetually over the features, and gives a charm to every look and gesture, that we rather feel than perceive. The purity which it expresses, it imparts; for none but a monster could take pleasure in depriving the soul of its bloom;—and such is that refined species of modesty. Exquisite consciousness!—affecting emanation! It is this which alone gives warmth to virtue, and poignancy to beauty; and yet it is little known, and less valued, in the higher circles. Were women of fashion once sensible of its wonderful influence, did they seriously consider how often it attaches us to that rustic part of the sex who have little else to recommend them, they would set a due value on this touching charm, nor so thoughtlessly sacrifice it to the false elegance of unrestrained ease. I will grant, that it is to be retained only by denying themselves indulgence; but to captivate when novelty is past, is surely a great

point ; and we all know, that the grossest libertine is allured by the very purity which his adoration ends in destroying. Modesty and Chastity seem twin sisters in the family of virtues ; nor do I think it unfair to conclude, that where one is flown, the other is near following. A woman can never so highly flatter the man of her choice, as by convincing him that she is perfectly insensible to the rest of his sex ; and modesty is the barrier which most effectually divides her from them. You will often find chastity, undoubtedly, in married women ; and most ladies think it quite virtue enough ; discarding, as troublesome, the watchful sentinel, who proves, to all observers, the heart to be impregnable. I would hope, for the honour of the sex, that millions have the greater virtue who want the less : but let such be content with a common portion of our attachment. She who would be long adored (and what woman would not ?), must cherish every softness of character which modesty gives

to chastity. When I see how much time I have spent to tell you what might have been told in a moment, I should flatter myself that Lady Diana had blushed to the purpose, did not another name throb to my lips, and lengthen every sentence.

Yet surely the charm which I have sought to define, was never more obvious than in Lady Diana yesterday evening. A silence, that her fine eyes sufficiently showed was not caused by any want of ideas or words, made your little wife at length ashamed of rallying me so unmercifully: but, like a true woman, she threw all the blame of her own loquacity on me; and spent as many words in exculpating herself, as she before had in offending. In making this charge, I renewed the argument, which both agreed should be referred to Lady Diana. I seized one of her fair hands, through that to solicit judgement; but your wife protested against this, insisting that her pressure of the other would not have equal efficacy:—when, lo! the door was once

more thrown open, and in stalked the Duke of Fernham. The devil take all such formal fellows! say I; and eke the fools (I mean, of course, the porters) who let them in! The sight of my carriage and Lord Winchester's, had, I doubt not, alone induced him to stop his, and interrupt, what it is not in his power to make—good company. In one moment, all our faces were frozen as hard as a Dutch canal in January. Each, in turn, racked her or his brains for a topic common enough to suit his Grace's noble capacity. The news of the House—the sport at Newmarket—the French ambassador's servants' new-fashioned muffs—the tawdry christening of Sir Timothy Candlewick's son and heir—with every particular of the Honourable Miss Bounce's elopement, were severally discussed with due decorum: when I was fain to invite your snarling favourite Pompey to bite my fingers, that I might not offend decorum by a nap; and the ladies began to resort to that melancholy resource in

dull company, making a very exact survey of their fans. Still, presuming on his rank, the stupid fellow stirred not: on the contrary, he very impertinently examined Lady Diana and me, as if he thought that accident had not brought us together: and whenever her sweet eyes, oppressed by his, sought the ground, he ran over her whole person with that eager and devouring air almost peculiar to himself.

Having fairly worn out every quality-topic, Mrs. Trevilian ordered cards; but, foreseeing that he would then stay ages, I cried,—“I thought you were going to Ranelagh!” The ladies embraced the hint; when the Duke officiously offered to attend them. He had, therefore, the honour of escorting your lady, and I, with the fair Diana, called for her mother. The profound respect with which the Duke greeted the haughty old peeress, convincing her that he was charmed by her daughter, she e’en conscientiously determined that he should not want an opportunity to lose his whole heart; for

she, in a marked manner, allowed him the care of Lady Diana during the evening; who, too sensible of the danger of pleasing a man of a rank higher than mine, to whom perhaps her choice must give way, or she forget her duty, betrayed coldness, constraint, and apprehension, in every word and look. How powerful is the effect of the soul on the body!—the features of her lovely face were precisely the same, but vexation, in a moment, had taken the lustre from her beauty.

Piqued, on my part, at the old Countess, I resolved to let her have her own way, and flirted the whole evening with your wife, who was in high spirits:—it was agreed, on all hands, that she was never more happy. Upon my soul, it is astonishing to me, how you, a grave gentleman of forty-nine—I fancy at least (is it not so?)—ever ventured on a young woman of such uncommon parts. It shows you to have had a pretty good opinion of your own:—I honour you for the choice. Beauties are the general mark;

they are linked to fools, or knaves, as Vanity or Vice ordains: but a woman of talents, proves at once her husband's understanding, taste, and courage. Yet the words of Sedley were never so happily applied as to Mrs. Trevilian.—

Her goodness so disarms her wit
Of the offensive part,
While others only charm the ear,
She wins the very heart.

But have a care, honest Westbury; these husbands are cursed fellows to manage: disgusted if you should not do full justice to their wives' perfections, but outrageous if you are too sensible of them. After which sage reflexion, I shall forbear a subject so dangerous.

Have you seen George in his red coat? Tired of his chambers in the Temple, and thumbing musty folios, it one day suddenly popt into his head, that the Lord Chancellor, who had been his chum at College, was as young as himself, and perhaps would never be per-

suaded, either to die or resign the seals to him; that the life of a soldier was more amusing, his chance in this world pretty near as good, and his dress irresistible. The 'Squire, therefore, made a bonfire of his law-books, sent for a serjeant, learned to turn out his toes and cock his hat in the true military manner, bought a commission, and is now Captain Clifford; strutting about, much to his own satisfaction, in the ladies' livery, *alias* the king's.

It is a horrid thing to drive back every night thus to an empty house. What a pack of nonsense have I here scribbled, to cheat myself out of the most tedious awkward hour in the whole four-and-twenty—that between returning home and going to bed.

* * * * *

I am sobered with a vengeance! My fools have just delivered me the enclosed, which they yesterday, it seems, contrived to mislay. Take it, I beseech you: it closes the evening to great advantage.

“ My Lord,

“ AFTER the mortifying lesson of humility, which I have already unhappily been obliged to learn from your Lordship, I cannot but regret that any circumstance in life should compel me to remind you there still exists so insignificant a being as myself. But as I am sometimes more esteemed than I have been by Lord Westbury, a very worthy gentleman here has made me a proposal that my friends think I ought to consider with attention. A promise, too seriously and sincerely made not to appear to me inviolable, gives me no right over myself but that which your Lordship may restore to me. I have had too many melancholy convictions of how little value the mutual tie is in your eyes, to fear that I shall create you uneasiness, in requesting you to give to me that freedom which you have rendered at once a blessing and a burden.

“ As I need not doubt your glad compliance with this request, with sin-

cere wishes for your real welfare, I remain,

“ My Lord,

“ Your humble servant,

“ CECILIA RIVERS.”

I rubbed my eyes; examined the hand, the seal; took the whole for a trick of Mrs. Trevilian's, I own; but the post-mark, and other circumstances, convinced me that Cecilia Rivers, my Cecilia, the creature whom I once thought such a model of perfection, was sunk into a very common character—woman, artful, dissembling woman, merely: for you see she now finds it necessary to satisfy some fool, that she might have been my wife. I replied on the instant, coldly and bitterly enough. There I was wrong too:—contempt shows little minds the tender part in your soul, and civility is much more grating. Perhaps this very worthy gentleman was looking over her shoulder when she penned this curious epistle. I was not less to blame, if so, in my answer. Why

should I prevent her retrieving, as far as possible, her error? But there is an insolence in the implicated reproach—a cold and cutting superiority. Of whom, alas! do I speak thus harshly? Of her in whose snowy bosom my foolish heart even now lies buried!—she who was to have given virtue, pleasure, dignity, to my whole life!—for want of whom I wander, at this moment, through gilded apartments, lonely and wretched! Oh, Cecilia, Cecilia! how happy mightst thou have been, and have made me—

“ If half thy outward graces had been stor’d
About the thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But, fare thee well!
For thee, I’ll lock up all the gates of love;
And on my eye-lids shall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm.”

I am just in the humour to fancy that the candles burn blue, and the pictures glide out of their places!

LETTER XCIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

WHEN, when shall I be able truly to say that I have reached the climax of my griefs, my mortifications ! Each that occurs, appears to me to be too great to be exceeded ; yet another soon follows, so far surpassing the last that it swallows up all my past afflictions in the mighty present. Can this be the answer for which I supplicated Heaven and Lord Westbury !—for which I past four sleepless nights ! Read, read, I entreat, his cruel, haughty, insulting reply, to an address far too condescending on my part.

“ Madam,

“ IN the article of humility I have reason to think the obligation is at least mutual ; and, therefore, make you due acknowledgements. Although it is no

longer possible for me to form your happiness, I still interest myself so far in it as to regret that the delicacy of your principles should induce you to delay, for the trifling consideration of a promise, a decision no doubt important to your peace as well as fortune. I refer you to your own heart for a reason, when I add, that I release you from all ties, and have long held you to be as free as I think myself.

“ Polite wishes for the welfare of a lady whose prudence will always save her from repentance, are certainly superfluous ; but as she is obliging enough to make me her debtor on that head, I very sincerely return the compliment ; and hope that Miss Rivers will find every happiness with the unknown gentleman of her choice, in a state to which she cannot but prove an ornament.

“ I am, Madam,

“ With proper respect, &c.”

London.

Could you have believed Lord West-

bury capable of this? What remains now for me to say!—what, alas! to do! Shame is added to sorrow, and both prey upon my vitals. This is, indeed, “refining on calamity!” Oh, Lord Westbury! can this be written by that very hand which once poured forth on paper such fond panegyrics, such unmerited praises! You deliberately, then, devote me to the grave, and strew with thorns the short and dismal way to it which I was born to tread! Ah, why attract, by the apparent nobleness of your heart, every thought of mine! Was it only to sacrifice me with impunity—to strike the most killing disappointment through a confiding breast which rose to meet the blow! From any other hand it might not have been mortal—from yours—Oh, how can I even wish to survive his unkindness—his ingratitude!—all, all, but that, I could have borne!

“ Had it pleas’d heaven
To try me with affliction; had it rain’d
All kinds of ills and shames on my bare head—

Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips—
 Giv'n to captivity me, and my dearest hopes,
 I should have found in some place of my soul
 A drop of patience!
 But there, where I had garner'd up my heart,
 Where I must either live or bear no life,
 To be discarded thence!"—

But I, alas! was born to be a wretch,
 and struggle, in vain, to elude my fate.—
 He to reproach me with aiming at fortune!—Heavens! does not his own inhuman heart testify, that, could I have descended to accept wealth, I might have revelled in his, and ridiculed the weakness which allowed me to do so? Mark, too, his wishing me happy!—Happy! at the very moment when he is making me the wretch of the creation! Whatever his motive for this aggravating barbarity, hear, Heaven, I implore, my first, my last, my only prayer for him—Oh, never let his injustice to me affect his own fate! May his days glide on unmarked by disappointment, regret, or recollection! Grant him, in one word, all the blessings of which he for ever deprives me!—A fatal

fatal weakness has undone me, and, oh ! soon may I expiate it !

Thou, to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, pity, and in pitying end, the distractions of mine ; for I, indeed, am weary, and heavy laden, and long to be at rest ! Deign to recal this wayward, erring heart ; and teach me, at length, to profit by existence ! Sanctify my sufferings by their effect ; and let my tears be those of penitence and resignation, not anger and despair !—Alas ! Heaven alike rejects me ; for agonising drops at this moment blot my paper.

Many, many hours have elapsed since this killing letter came to hand ; and yet here am I, pale, miserable, almost frantic, exhausted alike by my grief and the efforts I have made to conquer it ! How shall I ever enough subdue my disdain to acknowledge to Colonel Percival, who suggested the letter, its aggravating consequence ! Oh, Pride ! sole passion that canst cope with love, why have I yet so much of thee in my nature, but to redou-

ble every evil ! Yet, what have I now to dread ?—what to blush for ? Can even the utmost invention of Malice find a new mortification for me ?

Why, oh why, did I ever fix my eyes on that deceiving face, or listen to that fascinating voice, since both ordained to charm and punish all the weak ones of my sex !

Yet what do I gain by delaying to appear ?—a severe increase of shame whenever I do. Mrs. Egerton is gone to chapel ; her daughter to the concert ; I am summoned to amuse the colonel. Ah ! think of my state of mind, and then think of my employment !

* * * * *

Heavy of heart, and worn out with weeping, I entered the parlour. Colonel Percival knew that I had received a letter, and, without uttering a word, sought its purport in my countenance. My eye sunk under his, and tears, inexhaustible tears, would flow.

“ Poor child ! ” said he with great kindness, “ I see how it is with you. This

lover of yours, then, is a complete scoundrel, after all!"

"I have nothing to wish, Sir," replied I in a feeble and tremulous tone, "but that I may have opportunity to return, in some degree, your generous attention; nor to regret, but the noblest of errors, that of believing the heart of the man whom I loved as incapable as my own of artifice or inhumanity."

"Faith, since it ends so," said he, recollecting himself, "I am half sorry that I made you write this letter; since, if he finds you do not marry, he will perhaps think that it was only a poor trick to recal him."

Hardly could a dagger have struck through my heart with more torturing celerity than these words. Good Heaven! what a train of degrading, hateful ideas did they muster! I gave myself up to the transport, and wrung my hands in a state of despair little short of distraction. What! had I justified by my own conduct his subterfuges?—had I descended to an

artifice not more selfish than mean? "Oh, I might have known that this letter would undo me!" groaned I aloud. "An overture that was right, could never, never have thus long escaped a heart so interested in the event!"

"Zounds!" returned he, "what an impatient spirit have you!—'tis well," drawing up his foot, and making wry faces, "that you never had the gout! If I have brought you into a premunire, I will bring you out of it, I warrant you. The story was trumped up by me only; and since I said a husband was ready, I warrant I will find you one.—To-morrow I can send to Ned Percival."

"Oh, no, no!" cried I, disdainfully enough: "my evils are sufficiently great already; a persecution like that would complete them."

A long silence followed, broken but by my sobs and tears; when the Colonel, recovering from the train of thought into which he had fallen, struck his hand on the table, as having suddenly determined.

“Come,” said he; “I have hit upon another plan that may save your pride your own way: I owe you a kindness for your watchful care of me, and can requite it. As matrimony does not seem your object, what I now shall say will not appear so ridiculous to you as it would to most young women. I am past the age when I required more from a wife than friendship and esteem. My name will not discredit you. I think I could swear that it is a more honourable one than his for whom you are mourning and groaning. This way I can handsomely provide for you when I die; and in the interim will expect nothing more on your part than what I have hitherto found. I think I can rely on your conduct, and shall thus put a generous revenge in your power. Come, child, what sayst thou to being an old man’s legal nurse for a little while?”

A proposal so disinterested and liberal surprised and almost overcame me. “Best and most benevolent of men, how can I show my gratitude for a generosity so singular

and unmerited ! You, have, I own, made the only kind of proposal that I could think of accepting, but yet you must allow me to decline it. Of all which the world once promised me, nothing remains but a pure heart and unsullied reputation ; and let those accompany me to the grave. Never shall the man who thus has insulted me be able to say that I married for a maintenance, or merited his injurious treatment ! Never shall your sister reproach me with having availed myself of her kindness to encroach upon her views, or lessen that fortune which her daughter so amply merits ! Add to this the drooping of a heart for which even gratitude is too tender an emotion. No, my nobly disinterested friend, my benefactor, my more than father ! no other tie than humanity is necessary to render you the object of my cares, my watchful attention, to the last moment of your life ! ”

“ Pr’ythee, Cicely,” returned he in a broken voice, “ do not distress me or yourself. If you cry and preach these

three hours, I shall have my own way at last. All the world knows that I am a cursed obstinate old fellow; and since I have undertaken for your being married, you shall be married, I promise you. Do not tell me of my sister: it will exercise her patience and piety. What the devil! when I have made my own fortune may I not dispose of it my own way? Ay, that I will, despite of all the old women now tooting in Lady Huntingdon's chapel! My sister Frazier's daughters have already fine fortunes. To Ned Percival I have promised my landed estate. Bess Egerton will come in for a favourite's share in the whole; and she is the only one of my relations who really wants anything from me. She is a generous girl, and will not grudge whatever I shall think proper to settle on you. I shall explain my design to my sister and niece to-morrow. The sequel of the story must come from you. I can only wish that to be concealed, because I would not be laughed at for an old fool, or have you spoken of as a young

one.—So, mind me, contrive the matter with Bess.—Dry your eyes.—I wont hear a word against my scheme.—Here will be my sanctified sister in a minute.—What signifies publishing to the world that you are unhappy? It is only offering your acquaintance an excuse for hating or shunning you.”

Wrought up to the pitch of indignation I at that moment was, there hardly lives a man whom I should have refused. Wonder not, therefore, that, urged—repeatedly urged—I at length consented! Consented—ah, what!—to marry, and not with Lord Westbury?—O agonising extremity!—a moment which will render my last a blessing!—And yet I do not even now repent, though I groan—I shudder. He shall find that I am not quite the desolate outcast he thinks me: elevated but by his will, annihilated at his pleasure!—No, an offer so truly generous ought not to excite regret. I gain many advantages by it, and I have, alas! none that I can lose.

My feelings will, surely, never more subside ; they are still in an agitation of enthusiasm almost amounting to phrensy. I even long for the moment which shall convince Lord Westbury that I meant not to retort his artifices. I shall never know another wish.

I hear the Colonel coming up to bed ; for his chamber joins that in which I sleep with Miss Egerton ; and by passing through the intermediate door I can still continue to do so. How happily is she at rest ! I will, I think, acquaint her with her uncle's design myself : should she disapprove of it, I can yet recede ; for never will I injure any human being who loves me, for my own sake.

Oh, Lord Westbury ! who could once have persuaded me that you, you yourself, would one day become my sole inducement to marry another !

LETTER XCIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

AMELIA, my dearest Amelia! if my last has not been sufficient to deter you from the project you meditate, let this, I conjure you, put an end to it. I will not consent to submit, even indirectly, to such humiliation. It may injure Mr. Forrester, and can never, never serve me. I know the soul of your Charles. I know, that, unawed by the rank and influence of Lord Westbury, if he found him a villain, he would not fear to tell him those truths which the sacred character warrants. But what evils might not his integrity bring upon himself and his helpless family! Besides, my dear, what misconception can we possibly labour under? Have we not met? Have we not written? In the one case or the other, surely, some mystery must have occurred, either to him or to

me, that would awaken suspicion. Ah, no: he acts upon reflexion! Wide is the difference of giving only the heart, or with it the hand and the fortune. When Lord Westbury fancied that he loved only me, he knew not the blooming heiress of Lord Winchester. Charmed with her beauty, proud of annexing to his own her honours and her fortune, Lady Diana Selwyn is, in reality, the innocent cause of all I suffer. I perceived the effect of her charms the moment that I saw him with her: nor did I need either inquiry or confirmation; but if I had, a newspaper which I have just read shows how well I looked into the future. It hints that Lord Westbury is set out with Lady Winchester for Bromley-Grove, where, it is said, their family alliance will be strengthened by means of the beautiful heiress. This, it is true, does not agree with your information, that Lord Westbury is expected at Arlington Court, but Lord Winchester's seat may lie in the way to it, for aught I know.

Lord Westbury then, for her, breaks through every decorum of life! Can Lady Diana approve an impatience so censurable? Ah, happy to obtain him, she regards not common forms!—Should I have been enslaved by them?—Why, then, reflect on her? I live in hopes that my marriage will take place yet of his; and if, afterwards, you ever mention me in his hearing, I shall not have the same opinion of your delicacy and understanding that I now entertain.

“ Mr. Forrester,” you say, “ cannot fail to open the eyes of Lord Westbury—to explain all.” All what, my dear? Has any part of my life been mysterious? Such an explanation would be as obtrusive as unnecessary. I think it an age to the day appointed for this ceremony. Oh! should he marry first, I shall sacrifice myself in vain!

I have, by long habit, gained a singular command of myself, and can dissemble to all the world but my Amelia. I will assume the smile of happiness, the pa-

rade of wedlock. The birth, the fortune of Colonel Percival, are not so far beneath Lord Westbury's as to oblige me to blush on the comparison ; and I yet flatter myself, that, should we ever again meet, one pang will pierce his cruel, selfish heart, even though his rich, his noble, his beautiful bride be present. Yes, I well know that his eyes must sink before mine, with all the self-conviction of guilt.—Alas ! what am I saying ? By what new phrensy am I now actuated ? No ; let me but be honourably married ; let him once be satisfied of that, and to the extremity of the earth let me fly to avoid him ! Every country can supply me a grave, and, ah ! what more can the most beautiful now afford me !

How generous a nature has Miss Eger-ton ! Although she wants the lively sensibility of love, or of unkindness, that can enable her to calculate the trials which determine my conduct, she rejoices to find her uncle means to strengthen our attachment by alliance, and only regrets that he should

have deprived her of the pleasure which she promised herself in sharing her fortune with me.

Mrs. Egerton, indeed, is of a very different disposition, but she struggles to conceal the disgust which her brother's intentions give her. Hardly can she excuse her daughter's conduct, in preferring, as she thinks, my interest to her own.

Colonel Percival's proposals are very generally known, and the settlements preparing. All his friends congratulate him, though many cast their eyes on his gouty frame, and scarce conceal their laughter.

I would, my dear, invite you to these melancholy nuptials, but I fear that I could not support myself against your sympathy. Compelled, by the insensibility and ignorance of those around me, to confine my griefs to my own bosom, it is that way alone I bear them. Had I not a consciousness of constraint, they would totally overwhelm me. Alas! my very soul would melt under the glance of an eye

tender as yours ! Too well do I love you to endure your presence, circumstanced as I now am ! Pity ! pray ! weep for me ! Recal the past, and you cannot—no, you cannot, condemn me !—What have I to reproach myself with ? I deceive not, wrong not, a human being ! I bring not to the respectable man who honours me with his name, a mind secretly alienated, or a reputation secretly sullied ! I have, to Colonel Percival, unfolded my heart, as fully as to Him who ordains my sufferings. Sheltered from the insults of Lord Westbury, and elevated in the scrutinising eyes of the crowd, I shall still remain mistress of my own conduct, and Colonel Percival shall learn how watchful an attention may spring from gratitude merely. Yes, every hour, every action of my life, shall show how anxious I am to deserve his disinterested kindness.

The remarks of the world, Miss Egerton will save me from ; and, surely, the opinion of the person most interested will have weight ? I should more reluctantly

intrude on the prospects of this sweet girl, did I not know that all which her uncle gives me is but more assuredly her own; nor shall I long withhold any part of her fortune.

She runs in with the garments she has busied herself in choosing for me. Oh that the satin in her hand were to shroud this beating heart, then cold and lifeless!

Adieu, my Amelia! Never more will you receive a letter signed

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER XCV.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

WHILE the political world are lost in surmises concerning the motive of Lord Winchester's return, I laugh from a conviction that it is only for domestic reasons: most probably to marry his daughter and bury his wife. The Countess

looks very ill, and the physician has written to inform her Lord that she never can recover. As she has taken from her antique face the single recommendation that it could ever have to my eyes—namely, her smiles—it seems only to want a couple of bones crossed under her chin, to complete the furniture of some hermit's cell.

Lady Diana, it is true, were she not to me almost invisible, is still the same: but the last time I had the honour of admission, I found her at work by her mother's side, spoiling at once her eyes and her embroidery by a flood of tears. Both ladies were vexed enough at my entrance, I believe; but I had too much address not to impute the redness of the sweet Diana's eyes to a cold; of which hint she immediately availed herself, and struggled to smile as usual, but withdrew the hand which I afterwards took, as hastily as if I had been guilty of an indecorum; while the keen glance of Lady Winchester obliged her to retire to re-

cover herself. The elder lady continued to net, and just spoke enough on common-place subjects to avoid downright rudeness, and render my manners ceremonious. Of course I made a short visit; which I should hardly have repeated, but for the arrival of her Lord.

I can account, at last, for the chilling reception which the antique gave me. The Duke of Fernham has been hastened into addressing Lady Diana, by seeing the silent intercourse which her eyes hold with mine; and Lady Winchester forgets that intercourse was once honoured with her approbation. She had, I doubt not, been proposing this odious lover to her daughter, whose tears were eloquently protesting against him, when, most *mal-à-propos* I own, your unlucky friend made his *entrée*. Shall I suffer her weak, vain parents to sacrifice this charming creature? She has no voice if I am silent. Can I allow a woman of her rank—lovely, accomplished, and admired—to rest her hopes upon a man who has not spirit

to be grateful for the partial distinction? At this moment my heart is so wholly disposed to save her, that, were she in my reach, I should fall at her feet, and tell her the whole truth, I really believe. Yet, would that delicacy which induces her to stifle the sensations of her own heart, allow her to accept one divided and racked as mine has long been? I dare not affront her with the offer. She now condemns me only for insensibility; but, being wholly unacquainted with my pre-engagement, supposes that each following day will realise her influence over me.

I have just had a letter from George, who has exchanged his regiment, and went to Bath to wait on his Colonel—a horrid old debauchee, as he tells me, with whom our Miss Rivers lives: and it is said, that, after keeping her till he is tired, he now intends to make her an honest woman. This George mentions as the tattle of the place, and laughs at himself (for he never was informed of my attachment) for being such a fool as ever to

have offered to marry her. He observes, that he still likes her well enough to have taken her out of Colonel Percival's clutches, had not the old fool's scheme been honourable. He found her, it seems, sitting alone with her venerable dotard; but says, that, whether from fear or love he knows not, she seemed ready to sink at sight of him. However, she soon resolved to keep her ground; and even affected an air of gaiety. "What an artful girl must this old flame of mine be," he adds, "since, at the time that she is publicly known to be in keeping, she looks like a second Diana." (Not *your* Diana, however, Mr. George saucily observes). The unfortunate creature tenderly inquired for my girls, he owns, while a tear, which she could not suppress, stole into her eye. She might, however, have spared the impertinence of recollecting either them or their foolish father.

I sometimes fancy that the Winchester race are offended at my not having given decision to my attentions; yet, does my

deep mourning allow me to act otherwise? It is true that the newspapers have almost married me to Lady Diana already; but fools alone rely on such intelligence. Not a word have I heard from the old Countess, for this fortnight, of the Bristol journey, or my expected escort; though, for an age before, I heard of little else. I find the family are going first to Bromley Grove; so I will e'en betake myself to Arlington; where I shall be at hand, and watch all their motions; for Lady Diana shall not be sacrificed, if it is in my power to prevent it. And what is this Duke of Fernham?—a Duke only; for nothing but his coronet has he to recommend him. A libertine by nature, but a miser by education, he wavers between the opposite characters, and, with a princely revenue, is so penurious and low in his pursuits, as to buy only the meanest and most vicious of the sex. Shall those arms that daily receive the mercenaries of love, encircle the sweet Diana?—and against her will, too? For-

bid it, every generous principle beating at my heart!—With me she must, at least, be comparatively happy!

I find, upon casting my eye over my letter, that I have not spared this dull Duke; but he is only the object of my satire, when compared with

Thy
WESTBURY.

LETTER XCVI.

TO MISS RIVERS.

OH my beloved, unfortunate Cecilia! by what extravagant phrensy are you now actuated? Is it possible, that, to gratify a false pride, a censurable caprice, you should resolve to profane the most holy of ceremonies? and dissemble with God, merely to punish his creature?

Recollect yourself, I conjure you! Never think of entering a family where

you will be considered as an intruder, while your own thoughts cannot offer any fund of happiness to counterbalance that painful conviction. You were born eminently to fill and adorn the first duties of life, had fortune matched your heart : but, hurt as it already is, how many unknown griefs may you yet have to struggle with ! Subjected, without resource, to the singularities of a man who is not endeared to you, how often may you be offended, how often afflicted, while the weight of an intended obligation imposes a silence which you can hardly guess the difficulty of maintaining ! After all, the Colonel is not without worldliness ; and though he has, by a vague kind of generosity, blinded and over-ruled your judgement, he may not the more esteem you for consenting to this extraordinary proposal. Men of his profession are too often irreligious and immoral. He may not be quite disinterested, my dear. It is not his conduct, it is yours, which astonishes and grieves me. What, were your father liv

ing—ah! what would he think, were he to know that the darling of his heart, forgetful of her purity, had reduced herself to the level of those who poorly barter the blessings of the next world for those of this! And for what is this effort made?—to pique a heart to which your future conduct may be entirely indifferent. If, indeed, your health suffers so severely, how soon will all transitory griefs pass away like a shadow! Yes, my Cecilia, I shall then see your noble mind exert its energies to prepare itself for a reward proportioned to your sufferings; and while these hands are piously closing your eyes, I shall raise mine, full of a happy consciousness, to that heaven “where do live the spirits of the just made perfect, when they are delivered from their earthly prisons,” and fancy that I see the pure one of my friend waiting to conduct me thither. Cecilia, my own tears flow, my own heart is hallowed, by the idea;—may it have the same influence upon yours! Ah, stoop not, at last, from the unstudied superiority which I have

ever delighted to trace in you !—No self-reproach, that worst of mortal pangs, yet rankles in your heart : that it never may, recal your reason, your principles, your religion ; reflect while you can, and withdraw your word.

Since it is cruelly ordained that my home can never be yours, I will leave it for awhile, to console, strengthen, watch over you. Mr. Forrester will not refuse me the dear, the melancholy pleasure ; I am sure that he will not. Much he loves my Cecilia, and the tears of his wife are not so often shed before him as to be ineffectual. Our own income will afford us every thing essential, and more I cannot promise ; yet, surely, this is a situation preferable to splendour at the charge of those indifferent to us. If your venerable friend should happen to have less generosity than he professes ; if he should be, as you say his sister has described him, an incorrigible libertine, subdued to a temporary sobriety only by malady ; may not the youth, the sweetness, the

sensibility of my Cecilia, have been stronger motives for his offer than all her virtues? Think, when once he calls you his own, what privileges he may claim! Tears, complaints, and even reproaches, I have been told, have charms for ancient voluptuaries; and your punishment may be included in your fault. But even if my fears for you should make me unjust to him, if he really should prove the liberal disinterested protector he professes to be, will the triumph you meditate be worthy of yourself?—will it bring one hour of blessed tranquillity to your bosom? Ah, no! cruel comparisons, hopeless repinings, will be all your portion! and, should it be possible that Lord Westbury has any vindication of his conduct to offer, what would become of you on the conviction?

You who have, in instances of higher import, nobly contended with human weakness, must not yield in this. Let Lord Westbury marry another, if his heart will let him. Heaven will avenge

the injustice, and his Lady Diana may be only its instrument. Sink not below him whom you have so often soared beyond. How does his marrying affect your situation? Once resolve to consider his bride-elect but as the lady whom he has lost; endeavour to forget that he has ever been freed from the tie of matrimony; and, though you are only Cecilia Rivers, you might meet his eyes with more true dignity than when married so unequally as to leave him reason to believe that the tie was only a legal sale of yourself. He cannot know this strange, unnatural, secret arrangement; and if he concludes you to be indeed Colonel Percival's wife, your own feelings will tell you whether that impression will add to his esteem for you, or lessen the approbation of his own conduct, which self-love induces. Oh, my dear! is it necessary for me to remind you, that the only species of revenge which Heaven authorises over vice, is the glorious superiority of virtue.

I have scribbled incoherently, and in

haste; for I own, if I should have influence to over-rule this strange resolution of yours, I could wish to conceal from Mr. Forrester that you had ever formed it.

I was just going to fold my letter, when Lord Westbury drove through the lane, in his phaeton, to Arlington: so you see how much you should rely on newspaper paragraphs. He was alone; and my eyes either deceive me, or his look was as melancholy as his bow was cold; although his countenance might in that case, perhaps, be only the reflexion of my own.

Oh that I had dared to stop the carriage, and, by a few brief questions, satisfy the doubts still lingering in my heart!

What joy would it yet give me, to be summoned by you! Come, is all I ask; but, oh! be sure that you sign the summons with the name of Cecilia Rivers!

Yours, ever,

A. FORRESTER.

S. Hamilton, Printer, Shoe-Lane, Fleet-Street.



er-Lehrwerkstatt
Solmsheim
ngen bei Gänzburg

Lee, Sophia,

The life of a lover in a series of letters ; in six volumes

Bd.: 3

London (1804)

P.o.angl. 203 b-3

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10747268-2